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**Community and Communication from a Synchronic and Diachronic
Perspective (Part I)**

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Community and Communion in the *Quest of the Holy Grail*

Abstract: In this article the author intends to analyze to what extent the Holy Grail, which may be regarded as a symbol for the Holy Communion, can be considered the basis for creating and preserving a community in the *Quest of the Holy Grail* (*La Queste del Saint Graal*), as rendered in the Vulgate Cycle. One starting point is to identify the elements which determine and define a community, and the author tries to apply these characteristics to the gatherings presented in the *Queste*. There are several moments when the Holy Grail appears in front of a group of people, and it affects those assemblies in different ways.

Starting from the well-known fact that a Christian community is created around the Holy Communion, or the Holy Eucharist, celebrated with the Holy Chalice, it is to be expected that the Holy Grail, used in a similar situation, also gathers a community of knights around it and elevates them spiritually. However, the author will show that these expectations are not achieved, as neither the Quest, nor the mystical Grail, can establish a community. The text of the *Queste* does not introduce any sort of community either terrestrial or celestial, which could include most of the knights involved in the Quest.

Keywords: medieval, 13th-century literature, Arthurian literature, Holy Liturgy, Christian community

Introduction

The Grail is a symbol of Christian mysteries and it suggests faith and hope, as it has healing powers and, at the same time, abundance and bliss, as all can experience a deep feeling of contentment, while being wondrously fed from it. These emotions should engender a sentiment of togetherness and camaraderie and, once the knights tasted from the Grail in the great hall of the castle in Camelot, they should feel united. Nevertheless, this is not the case at the beginning of the *Queste*, because the presence of the Holy Grail in the midst of the Arthurian knights leads to the disruption of their aristocratic community. It is this shared meal on the Pentecost, which prompts the knights to leave Camelot and to start their indefinite search of the Holy Grail.

Using the theories presented by George S. Wood and Juan C. Judikis in their work, *Conversations on Community Theory*, I will ascertain if the Holy Grail can create a community around it, or at least if those who look for it are united by higher purposes and spiritual expectations, a fact which might help them become part of a different kind of congregation. Galahad's presence in the middle of the people of Sarag and his position as their king should also create a highly mystical Christian community in the city where the Grail has resided for so long, so in this article I want to establish if such a situation has materialized.

King Arthur's Community at Camelot and Its Dissolution

Defining the idea of community proves a very difficult task because this concept is not only elusive, but also continuously changing. The most common description starts from belonging to a certain geographical area (the hometown or the neighborhood), in other words the community is the group of people living in the same space, but such a definition is rather obsolete today, as people can also define the community they belong to in terms of sharing ideas, beliefs, and other cultural values (Wood 9-10).

Thus, one can talk about the Christian community or the Muslim community, and, furthermore, the academic community may also be defined in similar terms, as the group of people interested in scientific research in different fields.

The knights who lived and fought according to the code of chivalry made up the aristocratic community and an idealized form of it is presented in the *Queste*. The young men seated around King Arthur's table do not only share a common set of ideals, namely the chivalric code (associated with the code of *fin' amour*), but they also feel a strong friendship between them, which prompts them to help and support each other, while acknowledging the responsibility to behave according to the expectations of those around them. All these elements: the common interests, the awareness of interconnectedness and, especially, a sense of responsibility towards the well-being of the members of their group, are elements that show that some people have become a community.¹

The customary and regular life at King Arthur's court implies spending time together in banquets, tournaments, hunts, et cetera, but some knights also leave the place from time to time, and return with stories about their glorious adventures. They often travel together, but even if one departs by himself, he welcomes the company of another knight and rejoices when he encounters a friendly companion. Therefore, the communality of interests and the awareness that they belong to the same community is obvious.

The knights also belong to the same geographical area, as they share the same space and live harmoniously at the Arthurian court; moreover, while the community is beneficial for its members, it equally benefits from the arrival of new members. Lancelot invites Galahad to the court as soon as he has knighted him, as the community of knights² is the right place where a knight can receive the proper education and forge for himself an elevated position in society. This fact is connected with another important role of communities, namely to educate its members. The attribute, or rather the responsibility, to form its members is a defining element for a certain community: "Every community educates its members. Every community teaches. One cannot belong to a true community without learning in the community and from the community. An educational process is inherent in community" (Wood 112). On the other hand, a process of uniformization occurs because of their common education and this is visible in the Arthurian gathering as well. All the knights who sit at the Round Table have similar manners and inclinations, which makes them almost interchangeable, with few notable exceptions.³ While on the quest, their identity is fluid and, as a result, sometimes they are unable to recognize each other, so they fight and kill their opponent,⁴ unaware that he is a friend and not an enemy.

But outwardly, the fact which destroys the Arthurian society in the *Queste* is the appearance of the Holy Grail, which seems at first to be a blessing sent to show that King Arthur's kingdom has the divine

¹ According to Wood and Judikis, there are six essential elements that determine whether a community is present: "1. A sense of common purpose(s) or interest(s) among members; 2. An assuming of mutual responsibility; 3. Acknowledgement (at least among members) of interconnectedness; 4. Mutual respect for individual differences; 5. Mutual commitment to the well-being of each other; and 6. Commitment by the members to the integrity and well-being of the group, that is, the community itself" (12).

² Dame, souffres que vostre nouiax cheualier viegne od moi a la cort le roi artu car il amendera asses plus que chi od vous (*Queste* 4) [Madam (abbess) grant that your new knight comes with me to the court of King Arthur, for it will profit him more than staying here with you].

³ The exceptions are the knights who are successful in the Quest: Galahad, Perceval and Bors, as well as Lancelot, who is actually the main character of the entire cycle.

⁴ Sir Owein challenges Sir Gawain and Sir Hector, who are very eager to joust; but they all regret this misadventure when Sir Gawain badly injures Sir Owein, and, as a consequence, he dies (*La Queste* 109).

sanction,⁵ but in the end it shatters the community, since all knights leave Camelot. Nonetheless, the knights' fascination with the Holy Grail does not necessarily have a spiritual reason, as it can be triggered by their desire for wondrous adventures. This desire is the reason why they have the custom of witnessing a marvelous event (before sitting down to have a meal), such as the attempt to pull out the sword from the stone floating in the river.

Another possible reason for the knights' desire to start the Quest may be their awareness that there was something missing in their understanding. They are told that they do not see things clearly, but blurrily, as if under a veil "Mais de tant soumes nous engingue que nous ne le peumes ueoir apertement ancois nous fu couuerte la vraie semblance" (*Queste* 13) [but we were so blinded that we could not see it clearly, rather the true aspect was covered]. Gawain's words make them realize that they have perceived reality inaccurately, so a change is needed in order to help them visualize events in a different and innovative light.

Before the Quest, which is expected and prophesied, Arthurian society seems to be in a state of inertia and they all hope for miraculous events to bring about some excitement. Communities need to change and to rethink the reasons for their existence, their purpose, et cetera. "There is a suggestion in the theory that all communities have limited lives as successful entities unless they build into their modes of operation some reinvention process to revitalize themselves" (Wood 126). Leaving for the Quest of the Holy Grail is part of this process of revitalization of the Arthurian community, by reviving the spiritual ideals which were the roots of the knights' code. However this change, needed to energize their community, starts by dismantling it, as the castle is almost abandoned, to the king and queen's dismay.

Furthermore, many of the knights do not return and those who come back are not spiritually enlightened, but rather dispirited and disappointed. The attempt to improve the Arthurian community fails as the only knight who comes back after having fulfilled the Quest, i.e. Bors, cannot bring about a notable and constructive change. Moreover Lancelot, who is deeply changed during the Quest and regrets his sins, reverts to his adulterous relationship with the queen, and in *La Mort Artu* (the last volume in the Vulgate Cycle) the fratricide fights bring about the final dissolution of the Arthurian Court.

The Failure of the Community of the Questers

When the knights start the Quest, they all seem to be moved by high ideals and spiritual expectations, as they all want to find the Grail and to enjoy its transcendental power. They start together, but they have to take different roads, although they all hope to find and live close to the Grail. These common expectations, as well as the fact that they follow the same rules in their journeys, hint to the possibility that the wandering knights endeavoring to reach the same goal can be considered a community. "Communities are also made up of people who find common cause with one another, who see the world in a similar way, who have similar concerns and aspirations" (Herrick 20). Such a community is formed when people have the same values, and this might be the case for the questers, since they all believe that the ultimate prize is the Holy Grail, and they all hope to encounter it.

The community of the questers is not something well-established, but rather the result of experiencing the same deprivations and facing the same challenges. Being part of such a community implies being involved in an activity. "The idea that community is a *process* rather than a place [...] takes us in new directions" (Wood 9). This activity, or process involves cultural behavior, as all knights obey the chivalric code, even when this leads to them fighting each other, as well as a social structure, which is implied by

⁵ "Arthur's creation of an almost ideal earthly kingdom is recognized by heaven when the Grail appears in his court, but the intrusion of the spiritual world destroys earthly harmony instead of coexisting with it" (Barber 110).

the hierarchical order. Lancelot has been the best knight, but he is surpassed by his son Galahad, who is considered morally superior.

Galahad, as well as the other knights involved in the Quest, could make up the community of the questers, after being part of (and abandoning) the community of King Arthur's Court. Galahad's identity, as well as the identities of other knights, depend on their deeds, so in other words, on the narratives of their adventures. Moreover, what one can witness is the fact that the Arthurian knights belong successively to different communities, adding thus new elements to their identity:

The narrative of a person's life is always embedded in the story of the communities in which the person participates. The community is crucial in the process of identity formation, because it mediates to us the transcending story, bound up with which are traditions of virtue, common good and ultimate meaning, by means of which we construct our own narrative. (Grenz 51)

By creating a community of the questers, the knights participating in the quest refine, or even redefine, their own identity.

Unfortunately, despite the knights' initial enthusiasm and their determination to take part in the adventure of the Grail, very few of them have the spiritual purity absolutely necessary for this feat. Therefore, Lancelot, the most esteemed knight, is not good enough to ascend to the Grail and he has to repent and admit the fact that he is sinful. Lionel, Bors' brother and good friend, shows his true cruel nature during the Quest, when he behaves as a resentful and vengeful person. It seems that when faced with different challenges, most of the knights lose their fortitude and even their faith. This change in attitude makes it very difficult to define the community of the questers, since the members of this possible community behave differently and consequently, they follow dissimilar sets of values.

The community of the questers could be defined, perhaps, as the assembly of knights who have adventures, while searching for the Grail, regardless whether they find it or not. However, having adventures, while on the Quest, is a gift and very few knights have the chance to experience it. Thus, those who wander aimlessly and get bored⁶ cannot be considered part of the same fellowship as Galahad, Perceval, Bors and even Lancelot, who encounter many adventures, a fact which improves their understanding of reality, changing them into better persons.

Therefore, despite their excellent beginning, the knights who set off in search of the Grail are a fragmented group, with different moral features, and very different life stories. While some have inner strength and faith, others are proud and shallow. The attempt to create and define a community for those in search of the holy vessel is doomed to failure, because there is no continuous connection between them. Although they start together, and from time to time they travel in small groups of two or three, they do not really worry about the well-being of the other knights. On the contrary, they kill each other by mistake (when they do not recognize their opponent) and even worse, Bors' brother, Lionel, deliberately tries to kill him,⁷ several times and kills two other people instead, one of them being a fellow quester.

Therefore, analyzing this group of knights, one can say that, although there is an initial communality of interests, there is no commitment to the well-being of each other or to the integrity and well-being of the group, as an entity, features which must be met when defining a community (Wood 12). In other

⁶ Gawain declares: "I en ai troue puis XV iors plus de XX chacun par soi mais il ne not onques j qui ne se plainsist a moi de ce quil ne pot trouer aventure" (*Queste* 105)—[In 15 days I have found more than 20 knights, each of them alone, but did not meet even one who did not complain of the fact that he could not find an adventure].

⁷ Although initially he appeared to be as loving and affectionate towards Bors, as his brother was towards him (*Queste* 4-5).

words, the questers cannot belong to a community although sometimes they travel together. The fact that they share the same space does not necessarily imply the existence of a similarity in mentalities.

It is the case of Galahad and Melian, who has been knighted by the former. Although they have started their journey together, at the first crossroads they go along different paths, as they choose different roads. Melian wants to follow the way towards glory and fame, which is a terrestrial quest, while Galahad, who is aware of the celestial meaning of this quest, goes on a different path. The reason for this separation, which Melian regrets afterwards, is the fact that they understand reality differently, i.e. they use a different system of decoding reality (Looze 238-239). Furthermore, the same difference in interpreting the significance of various events can be noticed when the other knights have to make choices. Eventually, when they encounter no adventures at all, most of the knights return admitting their failure. It is a failure in finding the Grail and at the same time it is a failure in creating a fellowship of those who searched for the Grail.

Perceval wants to travel together with Galahad, but, for some unexplained reason, the latter runs away from him, and even fights him, refusing to reveal his identity. Perceval wants to know more about the knight who defeated him, and his aunt warns him not to try to attack that knight anymore. Perceval is only able to join Galahad and travel together with him, after a period during which he becomes more experienced and aware of what the Quest implies (i.e. after his stay on the island). Bors is also a member of this party, but the three friends do not care about their group as a unit, and they are not interested in the welfare of their group, but rather, each wants to achieve his ideal.

Although, towards the ending of the Quest, Bors, Perceval and Galahad have some adventures together, after a time they agree to go on different routes. “Mais metes vous le matin a la voie chascuns par soi” (*Queste* 173) [But leave in the morning, each on a different route], says Bors to the others and later on they agree: “hui est li iors que nos deuons departir and aler chascuns sa voie” (*Queste* 174) [today is the day when we must part and go our different ways]. Still, they are also aware that they shall meet again; and indeed, during the last part of the journey the three knights travel together (until Sarras).

In their search for the Holy Grail, the knights do not forge a real fellowship in which they might support each other or even sacrifice for another, i.e. there is no awareness of a community. Nevertheless, they can be part of a “momentary community” (in the definition given by Wood 22-23), as they are eager to travel together and they rejoice when they meet each other. Despite the moments of profound happiness when they weep of joy to be in each other’s company,⁸ they do not share a strong relationship that might determine them to work or fight together to overcome an obstacle or solve a mystery. Each knight follows his own destiny and path, and although they are pleased to be together, they do not attempt to join their forces and act as a team.

A Grail Community?

The element that appears to connect all the questers, and indeed all Christian knights, is the Holy Grail, which is the object of their hope for a profound spiritual life, and also the goal of their quest. The symbolism of the Grail is infinite, but the core of its significance is its connection with God. Moreover, feeding from the Holy Grail is a movement similar to partaking of the Holy Eucharist, which is associated with celebrating Mass.

The Christian community gathers around the chalice at the Holy Liturgy, as it is the center of divine worship and through it Christians enact their “fellowship with Christ and with one another in the faith

⁸ ...lors encontrerent bohort qui cheualchoit tout sels et quant il le reconnurent si en furent moult ioiant car moult le desiroient a veoir... (p. 187) [they encountered Bors, who was riding alone and when they met, they were very happy because they desired to see him very much].

community" (Grenz 536). The Grail comes to Camelot, but a community of God, centered on the Grail, does not materialize. The same situation occurs at Corbenic, where the Grail resides for some time, and at a certain time feeds 12 knights, but it does not create a longstanding community of the Grail.

The presence of the Grail is most prominent at Sarras, where Galahad, Perceval and Bors feed daily from it. Although in jail, and separated from any other friends, the three knights live happily in solitude, a context which makes the connection with God stronger. They never complain and, in his prayer, Galahad asks for death, as an opportunity to live even closer to God. Their behavior illustrates the religious precept: "true human life is the enjoyment of community with God" (Grenz 305), but at the same time it does not strengthen the connections between the members of their group. They do not pray for each other or mention in any way the joy of being together, and they do not miss the company of any of the other knights, either.

According to the Christian doctrine, the community of God is the community of the saints and of the worshipers gathered in the church, around the chalice, which is used to celebrate the Holy Eucharist. The "ecclesial community" (Nichols 36) is the unit that defines Christian life and it comprises both the departed and the living in a harmonious gathering, whose aim is to partake of heavenly bliss, in this world and the other.⁹ All the believers are expected to rejoice in the presence of their neighbors, as the liturgy on Earth anticipates the liturgy in Heaven.

This ideal picture does not describe the society that Galahad and his companions encounter and promote at Sarras. The three knights are alone in front of the Holy Grail, they have no converts and nobody is saved or elevated because of their intercession. They are not interested in creating a community, not even when Galahad becomes king. No action to draw the people of Sarras closer to the Grail is mentioned during the one-year period while Galahad is king. His reign is described in a few lines and does not influence his subjects in any way,¹⁰ as they are not mentioned at all. It seems that by becoming their king, Galahad's only interest is in securing a safe position,¹¹ so that the people of Sarras do not bother him or his companions, anymore.

Instead of being a leader (king or not) who guides his people towards God and salvation, Galahad¹² is the epitome of a contemplative mystic, loving mankind from afar, in other words a loner who feels no need for human friendship, since he constantly lives in God's company. However, people need him, and have

⁹ The presence of Josephus at the Castle of Cobernec supports this idea of a continuous celebration of the Mass, on Earth and in Heaven: "ne vous emerueillies pas se vous me vees deuant vous ensi comme ie sui a cest saint vaissel. Car aussi comme ie le serui terriens aussi le serf espiritels" (189) [Do not be amazed if you see me in front of you in the same way as I am near this Holy Vessel, because the same way I served on Earth, I serve now in Heaven]. Saint Joseph, also called the first Christian bishop in the *Queste*, celebrated the Holy Liturgy on Earth (in Sarras in front of Galahad and his other two companions) and he has the same duty in Heaven.

¹⁰ The only thing he does is to decorate the place where the Holy Grail is located.

¹¹ He has been threatened with death several times by the people of Sarras, including the moment when he is asked to become king: "Et il mistrent la corone dor...et por ce quil veoit quie faire le couint lor otroia il car autrement luessent il ochis (196) [...and they set the gold crown [on his head]...and seeing that he cannot do otherwise, he accepted, because they would have killed him].

¹² The people of Sarras do not benefit spiritually from Galahad's presence, although a man's soul is saved at the abbey in the land of Gorre, because of his involvement. The voice of the dead man addresses Galahad: "Mais nostre sires ma regarde en pitie par la grant humilite qui est en vous si ma oste la soie merci de ceste dolor et ma mis en ioie des ceils seulement por la grace de vostre venue (186) [But our lord took pity on me because of the great humility that is in you and moved me, all thanks to Him, from this pain and placed me in the joys of Heaven, only because of the grace of your coming].

entrusted him with the highest position in the land, but he neither counsels nor prays for them, as hermits usually do.

The *Queste* abounds in examples of recluses who live isolated, but are visited by knights (and probably other people, too) who ask for their advice. Such devout people show their love for mankind and their fellow neighbors by conversing with them and imparting their God-inspired wisdom. Unlike them, Galahad does nothing to tell the others about the spiritual treasure he rejoices in, and he does not forge any relationship with the people around him. His only company is God and the other two comrades, but as long as Galahad lives in the proximity of the Holy Grail, their presence is not really necessary for his contentment.

The three knights that have accomplished the Grail Adventure and live close to it for two years do not have a community, although they preserve their friendship. This reality shows that the lack of a community in the *Queste* is not due to people's sinfulness, which can be blamed for other types of alienation. The sorrow brothers feel when they are forced by circumstances (or personal choices) to fight each other, as well as the solitude encountered while wandering during the Quest, can be caused by the protagonists' sinful nature, but the inability to create a Grail community is due to the fact that, in the *Queste*, a knight (even if he is "the best knight in the world")¹³ is unable to love both God and his neighbor.

The knights' desire to find the Grail, i.e. search God, has separated them from the Camelot society, but their attachment to terrestrial interests (glory and fame) and life-style (rich clothes and trimmings) makes it impossible for them to fulfil the Quest, and, consequently, the community of the Arthurian knights cannot become the community of the Holy Grail. Thus, each knight follows his own individual path, either disappointed (some return disheartened to Camelot) or contented (the three knights who rejoice in the presence of the Grail and also Lancelot, who has the chance to experience this joy only briefly).

Conclusions

Despite the rich symbolism of the Grail as a source of togetherness and unity, the knights looking for it do not have the ability to forge a community or to acquire a sense of togetherness, in order to support each other and to become stronger as a group. Although they have this common goal, they cannot cooperate in order to find a way that would qualify them all (or at least more of them) to ascend to the Grail. Despite the guidance they receive from various clerics, the questers fail to understand the specificity of their pursuit and most of them end up lonely, and isolated, regretting having joined the Quest. The restrictions to reach the Grail are of spiritual nature and, therefore, they can only be understood and obeyed if a spiritual attitude is adopted by those involved.

The only hope to create a relationship that unites the knights involved in the Quest is for them to strengthen their connection with God, and thus to become part of the mystical community of God. Such an ideal situation can only be achieved if they have a virtuous life, after regretting and confessing their sins. Unfortunately, most of the knights do not understand this fact and remain bound to earthly concerns, failing to experience the spiritual happiness that comes from living in communion with God and with their neighbors. Not even Galahad can extend his love and devotion to his fellow Christians, as he focuses his entire attention on the mysteries of the Holy Grail. The world of the *Queste* is not structured in communities, as the wandering questers have no community, and there is no Grail community, either.

¹³ "li mieudres cheualiers del monde" (the inscription on the sword Galahad takes from the stone floating on the river at the beginning of the Grail adventure) (*Queste* 6).

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Speaking to New Scientific Communities: Indirect Values in Scientific Argument and Josiah Willard Gibbs' Simplicity and Coherence

Abstract: Scholars in the rhetoric of science have called for more attention to the contexts of scientific writing to better understand rhetors and audiences (Ceccarelli 2001; Fahnestock 2009). This approach is useful for analyzing the writing of 19th-century American scientists and their audiences because of the then common undergraduate courses in rhetoric, which college-educated individuals would have had as a shared educational experience. Noted for devising a system to determine phase change states in matter, Josiah Willard Gibbs was considered to be a singular intellect in the 19th-century. His prose was criticized for being difficult to read, but he often referred to “simplicity” in his papers, suggesting that issues of presentation were a primary concern for him. This article contextualizes Gibbs’ scientific arguments within the rhetorical concepts operating in the 19th-century and taught in the college courses of the time. Indirect values are utilized in scientific rhetoric and help to develop an understanding of potential connections between rhetorical education and scientific argument.

Keywords: rhetoric of science, indirect values, 19th-century America, simplicity, style

Motto: “The power of rigorous deductive logic in the hands of a mathematician of insight and imagination has always been one of the greatest aids in man’s effort to understand that mysterious universe in which he lives. Without the presence of this power, the experimental discoverer might wander in the fields and pick the wild flowers of knowledge, but there would be no beautiful garden of understanding wherein the mind of man can find a serene delight” (F.G. Donnan, “The Influence of J. Willard Gibbs on the Science of Physical Chemistry” delivered in September 1924).

Motto: “I had no sense of the value of time, of my own or others, when I wrote it” (Josiah Willard Gibbs on his “On the Equilibrium of Heterogeneous Substances”—quoted in William H. Cropper’s *Great Physicists: The Life and Times of Leading Physicists from Galileo to Hawking* [110]).

Introduction: The Ordered Garden of Theoretical Science

In his 1924 speech “The Influence of J. Willard Gibbs on the Science of Physical Chemistry” for the centenarian celebration of the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, F.G. Donnan credits Josiah Willard Gibbs (1839-1903) with what has long been considered a standard compliment for a scientist—that of “imagination” (483). Scientists often credit scientific imagination as a positive attribute, and this speech offers a standard formula for its expression. Donnan lists the accomplishments of Gibbs and the lack of immediate understanding in the American scientific establishment as proof of his far-reaching imagination and insight, which were capable of creating a metaphorically verdant (and ordered) garden space, so the

future experimentalist could fruitfully work. Later in the speech, Donnan credits Gibbs' imaginative power with creating the theoretical foundations for the lucrative industrial science in the late 1800s and early 1900s. By comparing this lofty image to Gibbs' terse reflection on his own writing, we can see a fundamental tension between content and form in scientific writing. Donnan values the work of Gibbs—his theories—but Gibbs feels that his writing wasted the time of his readers—he could have written something clearer or simpler. Donnan sees value in the theories' products, but Gibbs laments their presentation. The praise of Gibbs' scientific labor obscures several important elements of the communicative aspect of scientific work, which point to the centrality of rhetorical awareness in scientific prose construction, and highlights the constraints placed on science writers, when writing for an audience unfamiliar with the necessary background knowledge to understand their theoretical work.

Indeed, the rhetoric of science scholars calls for scholarship that recognizes the contextual nature of scientific texts and their reception. Ceccarelli argues that "rhetorical criticism always treats texts as a convergence of discursive opportunities and material constraints" (316). Later on, she reasons that rhetorical scholars are particularly well suited to investigating the relationships between texts and audiences (Ceccarelli 320). Fahnestock claims that "a historical approach within the rhetoric of science would look specifically for the influence of contemporary rhetorical theory on the practices of scientists *and the expectations of their audiences* who were trained in that theory" ("Natural Science" 184). I would like to borrow and augment her call to envision a more realistic reader and investigate the rhetor's perceived relationship with an idealized rhetor-text-reader relationship (as understood through the rhetorical textbooks of the time). Similar to Fahnestock's investigation of figures in *Rhetorical Figures in Science*, this article investigates the role of common 19th century understandings of style and explicates Josiah Willard Gibbs' texts within that framework, to better understand the rhetorical choices made by scientific rhetors when addressing audiences on an unfamiliar and complicated topic.

One element for rhetoricians to consider, then, is the role of values present in scientific arguments that are not directly related to the usual values of scientific work. In a re-examination of Alan Gross' seminal work in *The Rhetoric of Science* and *Starring the Text*, Nathan Crick explains that rhetoricians need to rethink the role of rhetorical scholarship by focusing on the moments when decision makers must "make practical judgments without other arts or systems to guide them" (26). In lieu of data or other evidence, judgments must be made through using what values are at hand that help undergird the larger practice of science and policy. Gregory Morgan outlines how William Whewell, noted philosopher of science in the 19th century, valued coherence as an aesthetic value of a theory that demonstrated beauty within a theory (6). Simplicity and brevity in scientific argumentation are, then, marks of the aesthetic qualities of the argument that signify the presence of coherence, the much-desired effect of scientific theorizing. In "Direct and Indirect Roles for Values in Science," Elliot distinguishes between normative values associated with epistemology and other indirect values that, while not central to doing accepted experimental or theoretical practice, affect the choice of theories and use of evidence (317). In particular, I am interested in exploring the role of "indirect values" of presentation in Gibbs' efforts to advocate for the adoption of a new graphic model, which showed a more fine-grained relationship between datapoints. These indirect values have correlations in rhetorical training and practice in the 19th century, and constitute a shared understanding of presentation.

Relying upon disciplinary knowledge and formal rhetorical training to advocate for his theories, Gibbs' prose demonstrates how rhetorical interventions are necessary for crafting coherent arguments; those rhetorical interventions are, in turn, not seen as rhetorical, but part of the labor of science. As James Berlin explains, 19th century New Rhetoric taught that "[l]anguage and things are considered separate, but the discussion of style—perspicuity, energy, vivacity, and the like—becomes central because of the importance of language to reproducing the content of experience in the minds of the audience" (8). As Bitzer explains,

the Scottish New Rhetoric argues that inferring and advocating—theorizing and presenting—are two different acts existing on a sliding scale of activity. Whately's formulation of the act of inferring and the act of advocacy exists on a scale of activity with "the philosopher," who infers on one side and the advocate, who presents arguments on the other (Bitzer 314). In the case of 19th century scientists, making arguments for and evaluating the labor of their work, this scale can blur the lines between the lonely labor of theorizing and the public labor of presenting. Since a major facet of the 19th-century scientific article was theorizing on the basis of and connection between natural facts, theorizing itself, the "tightness of fit between nature and its symbolic representation," became an object of discussion for scientists (Bazerman 33). Simplicity and brevity were two methods used to ensure a fit between nature and symbol, and two methods which Gibbs used to construct an argument for his theoretical coherence, which Andrew Pickering argues, comes from using the "plastic resources of practice" (279). A scientist's labor is then twofold: he or she must first craft the mathematical and theoretical scientific work and then convince others of its efficacy. In particular, coherence, as arrived at through arrangement in an argument, is a value that many scientists, past and present, accept as having an effect on evaluations of Gibbs' theoretical work. The coherence of his papers arguments is a direct demonstration of his capability to judge both his field and his heterogeneous audience appropriately.

This article gives a brief history of J. Willard Gibbs with an emphasis on his university training; sketches a brief overview of the academic culture of science in Gibbs' life; delineates Whately's specific discussion of elegance, perspicuity, and the metaphor as markers of his inductive rhetoric and as formal elements in a mechanistic conceptualization of the mind; examines two articles and one abstract, as illustrations of Gibbs' potential uses of his rhetorical training; and finally, explores how Gibbs' rhetorical labor of crafting coherent arguments is evaluated when his theoretical science is celebrated.¹⁴ Tracing the rhetorical training Gibbs was exposed to does not create a causal link; rather, it helps us conceptualize potential avenues for Gibbs to connect with the indirect, extra-empirical values (such as coherence) in common use during his lifetime. These connections are important ways of reconceiving the rhetoric of science and the historical connections it may have had with a 19th-century culture of rhetoric.

J. Willard Gibbs: From Mechanical Engineer to Physical Chemist

Josiah Willard Gibbs was a physical chemist, trained as an engineer, responsible for producing equations that plot states of matter as it undergoes transformation from a gas to a liquid to a solid. He was born in New Haven, Connecticut, on February 11, 1839 and, with the exception of his post-graduate work completed in Europe, spent his entire life and career at Yale in New Haven; he was awarded his Ph. D. in Engineering in 1863 by The Sheffield Scientific School. He then spent three years as a tutor in Mathematics and Latin, and in 1866 sailed for Europe to spend three years in post-graduate studies in Paris, Berlin, and Heidelberg. Gibbs' undergraduate training at Yale included instruction in rhetoric using Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* (Yale University). The third term of the sophomore year at Yale, between the years 1850 and 1871, required that all students read *Elements of Rhetoric*, except for section IV "On Elocution." Yale, like many American universities at the time, had not yet adopted the German model of higher education with its specialized disciplinary focus. Students were taught a liberal arts tradition aimed at creating a citizenry with a breadth of knowledge and ability to act civically. Rhetoric was a foundational part of this training.

¹⁴ The exact terms that Gibbs and Whately use to reference elements of the text do not match exactly. As will be demonstrated, Gibbs references "simplicity" and "brevity" in a fashion that clearly suggests he thinks of them as the same elements of argument as Whately's "elegance" and "perspicuity."

Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* and Elegant Composition

Richard Whately's (1787-1863) *Elements of Rhetoric* was first published in 1828 and is counted as one of the more widely distributed and influential rhetorics in 19th-century America. Golden and Corbett explain it was the only one of the three Scottish New Rhetoric books published in the 1800s, and by the time the book had reached its seventh and final revision in 1846, *Elements* had been revised and expanded beyond its original scope and length (273-274). While not every university student was exposed to this particular book, many students used rhetoric textbooks that took it as their inspiration. Jean Ferguson Carr, Stephen Carr, and Lucille Schultz report that Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric*, along with other rhetorics, had ten or more editions printed in the years 1831-1865 (49). The longevity of Whately's project speaks to the presence of his concepts of style in 19th-century writing. Its presence in so many rhetoric and composition courses throughout 19th-century America ensured that Whately's approach permeated composition instruction throughout the century. Instead of inventing topics for discourse, Whately encouraged students to manage the factual material they had found, so as to persuade the audience¹⁵. Whately's perspicuity, energy, and elegance are variations of simplicity and brevity as modes of presentation and descriptors of relationships between facts. By adhering to Whately's dictates, a writer can arrange the presentation of arguments in such a way as to elicit a desired response from the audience.

Stylistic elements drive the choice of appropriate arrangement in Whately's rhetoric, but these elements are not to impinge on the content of the argument; the elements are central to presentation and are not substantive. He introduces his *Elements of Rhetoric* explaining to his readers: "The process of investigation must be supposed completed, and certain conclusions arrived at by the process, before he begins to impart his ideas to others in a treatise or lecture; the object of which must of course be to prove the justness of these conclusions" (Whately 5). For Whately, rhetoric's primary function is arrangement. In "Consistency in Richard Whately: The Scope of His Rhetoric," Lois J. Einhorn explains that while Whately often seems to give contradictory or unclear instructions as to the scope and point of his rhetoric, he clearly demonstrates that he is concerned with managerial rhetoric. This managerial rhetoric takes already perceived truths and explains the best methods for managing their arrangement in argument. In particular, Whately discusses the functional aspects of style that are central to "conveying thoughts" (Einhorn 93). The three parts of perspicuity, energy, and, above all, elegance are addressed at length in Whately's textbook. Each element of style is explained through its effect on argumentative composition.

Elegant Arrangement in Whately

In *Elements*, elegance is the most complicated of the three items, and Whately spends considerable time in "Of Elegance" discussing the importance of the appropriate type of presentation. Although he explains to the reader that "On the last quality of Style to be noticed—Elegance or Beauty—it is the less necessary to enlarge" (Whately 328), the chapter is the only place that specifically details how to balance the three elements of style—perspicuity, energy, and elegance—when presenting an argument. Although elegance in the textbook refers to poetic language, he believes this chapter is the appropriate place to discuss the rhetor's duty to deploy stylistic elements that best support his argument. "Part 3" of *Elements* is divided into three chapters: "Of Perspicuity," "Of Energy," and "Of Elegance." Each chapter builds upon the one before it, but perspicuity and energy are discussed separately in "Part 3." However, they play a central role in Chapter 3 "Of Elegance" in a way that elegance does not in the preceding two chapters. Indeed, the final line of "Part 3" (and, coincidentally, the final line of the text as taught in Gibbs'

¹⁵ *Elements of Rhetoric* defines a clear path from evidence to presentation. Johnson (1991) suggests that Whately extends his project started with *Elements of Logic* and seeks to create a "'regularity of system' in the procedures for the discovery and arrangement of arguments" (Johnson 51).

undergraduate years, when the course in rhetoric explicitly ignored the final section of the book “Part 4: On Elocution”) warns students:

He [the rhetor] should carefully study *Perspicuity* as he goes along; he may also, though more cautiously, aim, in like manner, at Energy; but if he is endeavouring (sic) after Elegance, he will hardly fail to betray that endeavour (sic); and in proportion as he does this, he will be so far from giving pleasure, to good judges, that he will offend more than by the rudest simplicity. (338).

Whately spends most of the chapter on elegance cautioning students from the overuse of stylistic flourishes that would complicate their presentation and unduly confuse the audience, and he culminates these warnings with this final admonition—advising students to consider all of the elements of style. Whately’s understanding of elegance highlights the belletristic nature of this element of style, but he just as clearly instructs readers to use their judgment in knowing when and how to use elegance in their writing. Elegance, then, points to the judgment in a way that encompasses all other elements of style in Whately’s rhetoric, placing them in service to effectively arranged arguments.

In this culminating section of Part 3, Whately incorporates his prior discussions of perspicuity and energy into a discussion of elegance. When a rhetor is considering elegance, he or she is really making an informed choice between clarity and ornamentation; the most successful forms of elegant prose strike a balance between the two. This balance is even more important because the rhetor must strike it in the context of “having something to say” (329). It is this difference between research and presentation that the rhetor must consider. For instance, he explains that metaphors may be “striking” and “apt” for the argument and “conducive to Energy of expression” but a metaphor may also “have no intrinsic beauty” (328). Indeed, he warns readers that they must avoid the appearance of being too polished, for it will reduce the “force of what is said” (329). Ultimately, the rhetor must choose based on the content being presented and the audience’s taste and level of understanding. Scientific writers are especially burdened in this regard in Whately’s text, precisely because they must contend with many of the presentational choices that Whately sees as part of style. The scientist must be clear, excite the imagination of the audience, and consider language choice wisely.

Whately gives more focused instructions when it comes to scientific writing and professional ethos. The philosopher and orator combine in the example of the scientific writer and demonstrate the centrality of stylistic considerations to all argumentation. In this example, perspicuity becomes central to scientific argumentation, because it bridges the gap between the philosopher and the orator. For him, a lucid prose style is the central goal of the scientific writer:

Perspicuity is required in *all* compositions; and may even be considered as the ultimate end of a Scientific writer, considered as such. He may indeed practically increase his utility by writing so as to excite curiosity, and recommend his subject to general attention; but in doing so, he is, in some degree, superadding the office of Orator to his own; as a Philosopher, he may assume the existence in his reader of a desire for knowledge, and has only to convey that knowledge in language that may be clearly understood. (331, emphasis original)

Whately distinguishes between the two activities of research and presentation—the Philosopher and the Orator—in order to highlight the importance of choosing the most appropriate style. Choosing a style for one’s presentation is a matter of professional identity. Whately makes it clear that the scientist is no orator. The content alone should be enough to excite the reader, but Whately’s instructions imply that the scientific writer still has choices to make, when it comes to the effect his writing will have on the audience. These choices, according to Whately’s instructions, do affect the outcome of the presentation—the

reception of the scientific content. The arrangement of words and the arrangement of data are working to create the most efficient argument possible. The choice also reflects the presentation values and commitments of the scientist.

Gibbs' Publishing History, His Audience, and the State of Physical Chemistry in 19th-Century America

In the 1870s, Gibbs published two important papers in *The Connecticut Academy of the Arts and Science's Transactions of the Connecticut Academy*. Mary Ellen Ellsworth explains that The Connecticut Academy was a regional institution that drew its membership from local colleges and did not often have the chance to engage in international scholarship.¹⁶ Gibbs' first paper "Graphical Methods in the Thermodynamics of Fluids," published in 1873, articulated a new geometrical method for charting thermodynamic energy in different bodies of matter, but did not find a suitable audience for its work in the local academy.¹⁷ The limited distribution of the *Transactions* demonstrates a typical dilemma for the 19th-century American scientific rhetor. The intended audience is twofold—the immediate readers will be a local or regional audience, but the larger audience of disciplinary peers may not have easy access to the work. Although Gibbs' audience was other mathematicians, the members of the Connecticut Academy and his colleagues at Yale, the immediate readers of his first public work, could not follow the content of his argument.

Apprehending Gibbs' Simplicity

For Gibbs, simplicity, as a function of both representation and presentation, is a primary concern in his argument. He explains in "Graphical Methods in Thermodynamic Fluids" that his choice of method is "to be determined by considerations of simplicity and convenience" (49). For Gibbs, simplicity and convenience are the intersection of his prior experience with mathematical engineering and the ease with which mathematics can present certain types of data. In an effort to persuade his audience of its efficacy, Gibbs veers away from mathematical models and describes the process in prose:

The fact, that the different states of a fluid can be represented by the positions of a point in a plane, so that the ordinates shall represent the temperatures, and the heat received or given out by the fluid shall be represented by the area bounded by the line representing the states through which the body passes, the ordinates drawn through the extreme points of this line, and the axis of the abscissas,—this fact, clumsy as its expression in words maybe, is one which presents a clear image to the eye, and which the mind can readily grasp and retain. (53)

He highlights the ease with which the mind will imagine both the graphic representation and the actual physical event. Although he does not mention simplicity by name here, it is present as the unspoken opposite of "clumsy." Gibbs argues that even though the reader must frame the image (there is no illustration in this section of the essay), it is easily comprehensible.

¹⁶ See Mary Ellen Ellsworth's (1999) *A History of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences 1799-1999*. She explains that The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences functioned similarly to other early scientific gatherings—it was comprised mainly of gentlemen scholars who collected and shared work on local flora and fauna. The Connecticut Academy existed in a continuum of such institutions in 19th-century America.

¹⁷ In reality, hardly anyone understood Gibbs' work at the time of its publication; the limited understanding had more to do with his audience's training and the mode of disseminating his article, than with a lack of vision on the part of Gibbs' peers. Verrill (1925) notes that even the committee of professors who agreed to publish his works in the first place was at as much of a loss as other scientists of the era as to the content of Gibbs' work. (42)

In “Graphical Methods,” the success of Gibbs’ representational strategy hinges on the audience understanding his model as a series of points plotted on a plane, representing an infinitesimally small series of changes in order to create a record of imperceptible events: “Now if we associate a particular point in a plane with every separate state, of which the body is capable, in any continuous manner, so that states differing infinitely little are associated with points which are infinitely near each other, the points associated with states of equal volume will form lines” (“Graphical Methods” 43). Perspicuity, which Gibbs calls brevity, then, is a method by which he satisfies both the mathematical and the rhetorical demands by shortening his complex reasoning into something useful for a mathematician audience.¹⁸ As he sets his terms and outlines the basic functioning of this representational method, he clearly references concerns of ambiguity in his terminology and seeks to balance concerns with ambiguity with his interest in presenting a convenient form of representation.

For Gibbs, the pseudo-heuristic concepts “simplicity” and “brevity” often appear within the text as commentary on his presentation. This appearance suggests that providing his audience with insight into his deliberations over presentation of material supports a professional, scientific ethos that exceeds just the presentation of technical skill:

For the sake of brevity, it will be convenient to use language which attributes to the diagram properties which belong to the associated states of the body. Thus it can give rise to no ambiguity, if we speak of the volume or the temperature of a point in the diagram, or of the work or heat of a line, instead of the volume or temperature of the body in the state associated with the point, or the work done or the heat received by the body in passing through the states associated with the points of the line. In like manner, also we may speak of the body moving along a line in the diagram, instead of passing through the series of states represented by the line. (Gibbs, “Graphical Methods” 44)

Gibbs invokes brevity to explain a choice in descriptive language. He explicitly acknowledges the representational function of his work and implicitly points his audience to an understanding of the writing tasks he undertakes on their behalf. Because Gibbs understands that the potential audience for this piece may not understand the representational connections he makes, he includes these deliberations in the prose in order to demonstrate his faculty for judgment. Described above is a complex relationship between two representational systems; the diagrammatic system describes changes in volume or temperature, but these results, which are already inscribed in the language of the diagram, must be re-inscribed in prose. Recognizing the possible resulting confusion from this double inscription, Gibbs resorts to calling on brevity as a reason for his representational choice. Gibbs’s representational concerns are almost exclusively about convenience, brevity, and simplicity. Brevity and simplicity help achieve “convenience,” and they generate a sense of coherence in the argument. As Gibbs shortens long, complex terms, he hopes to demonstrate the efficacy of his argument. In the example above, he conducts an act of representational equivalence arguing that his method of representation will create a two-dimensional graph representing a three-dimensional change. Brevity erases the gap between the representation and the natural phenomena. By stating that brevity, an argumentative concern, is the reason for the shift in language,

¹⁸ This facet of his writing is also considered to be one of the more vexing problems with reading his work. Martin Klein (1983) reports that many mathematicians, including Einstein, found his terse writing difficult. Klein attributes Gibbs’ brevity to his lack of colleagues at Yale. Forced to work in relative disciplinary solitude, Gibbs would work out the problems of his work alone, and his writing reflected only the presentation of the completed idea rather than a series of articles working on a problem. Klein also reports that Gibbs rarely (if ever) shared his work in progress with his graduate students as well; he explains Gibbs was noted for being “of a retiring disposition” and not prone to discussing his work. (150)

Gibbs can make the representative model stand for natural phenomena. Furthermore, he demonstrates the persuasive power of rhetorical arrangement—of appropriately ordering and representing the argument one needs to make.

Gibbs' writing also demonstrates the difficulties faced by many theoretical scientists in communicating their work in the 19th century. As the 19th-century scientific rhetors theorized about abstract concepts, the scientific article reflected this by turning towards more abstract language and verb usage (Gross et al. 123). He attempts to make his argument intelligible by moving the theoretical conversation between the world of the mechanical and the world of the theoretical to introduce the new concept of entropy in chemical systems. The states of transfer that he is attempting to describe and theorize are on an infinitely small level, inaccessible to the naked or aided eye. He describes a mechanical system of two processes - the ones that retard motion like friction and the ones that increase change like heat or energy. He goes on to illuminate what those forces look like in a mechanical system and then begins to explain the relationship between those forces in a chemical system:

The condition which we have supposed is therefore sufficient for equilibrium, so far as the motion of masses and the transfer of heat are concerned [friction and the second law of the thermodynamics], but to show the same is true in regard to the motions of diffusion and chemical or molecular changes, when these can occur without being accompanied or followed by the motions of masses or the transfer of heat, we must recourse to considerations of a more general nature. (Gibbs, "Equilibrium" 59)

Gibbs is describing a mechanical construct that demonstrates a state of equilibrium between forces that retard work and forces that promote work. When matter changes state, it does not exhibit the mechanical signs observable in heretofore-familiar systems; instead, Gibbs is required to resort to "considerations of a more general nature." This is the first move from the mechanical world to the theoretical world in Gibbs' work. The generality of Gibbs' work is often cited as a key to its eventual adoption, and it is the underlying reasoning behind the use of mathematical models in scientific work. In effect, Gibbs is arguing for the adoption of his mathematical system through a more fundamental adoption of the efficacy of mathematics to solve this particular set of problems. The already agreed upon aesthetic components of mathematics are thus transferred to his overarching argument in this paper. Mathematics' ability to shorten and to model is used synonymously with his own argument to suggest that he could more effectively eliminate his dense prose by substituting purer mathematical models. The small community of mechanical engineers in the United States would have understood his mathematics (to an extent), if not the thermodynamic implications.

Gibbs insists on the simplicity of understanding even though it does not exist for most of his audience, and, in doing so, he echoes the standard advice found in Whately's text that explains that simplicity is always preferable when crafting an argument. This is not to say that Gibbs achieves simplicity in his argument, but that his continual discussion of it suggests that he understood the power of "simplicity" as a part of the style of argument. Indeed, as we saw in Whately's "Part III: Style," it is in the style of presentation that logical arguments are molded for consumption by the audience. Gibbs takes many opportunities to try and convince his audience of the simplicity of his argument, only to demonstrate through the technical complexity of his mathematics that his work is far from simple. And, we must also remember that Gibbs is not only arguing for the usefulness of his mathematical formula, but also for a still contested mode of understanding the natural world. Mathematical interventions into abstract and non-observable phenomena were only recently being adopted for widespread use in 19th-century science. All of these exigencies must be considered when thinking about the aesthetic claims Gibbs makes and the ultimate reception of his work.

Coherence and Aesthetics in Scientific Rhetorical Labor

Nineteenth-century scientists, much like their counterparts today, were responsible for crafting convincing arguments and demonstrating their judgment for an audience. Creating coherence is the primary labor of theoretical scientists, and one that draws upon their ability to arrange materials in their arguments relying upon direct and indirect values of scientific practice. Theories are coherent narratives that have predictive power and are useful for understanding certain classes of problems. Simplicity and brevity were used to craft theoretical arguments and advocate for their acceptance; both of these rhetorical elements speak to the supposed coherence of the theory, but both elements are also functions of arrangement of argument. In this sense, we can argue that coherence is obtained through a strategic deployment of the elements of the article, paper, or treatise. The theory, as commonly understood by philosophers of science, never exists outside of language; it is always presented in a paper, an article, or a treatise—there are always prefatory materials, examples, et cetera. For all intents and purposes, the theory is embedded within a written structure dependent on the then current understandings of what constitutes successful writing. For all of its mathematical complexity and (ultimately useful) ability to predict the behavior of substances, Gibbs' theories exist within a matrix of language and representation produced in accordance with standard conceptions of writing practice at the time. Without bridging the gap of communication using indirect values associated with communication, Gibbs would have had difficulty communicating with a newly forming scientific community, whose own values were not yet fully formed. The graphic representations were useful to the mathematician, but the written composition was also directed at the non-mathematicians that were also part of the scientific audience.

Conclusions

The two evaluations of his writing described at the beginning of this article shed some light on different aspects of Gibbs labor as a scientist. Donnan's nod towards the imagination demonstrates the ways in which Gibbs' theoretical work is valued as an imaginative act with arrangement at the center of its activity; indeed, the garden has long been considered the image of ordered nature in literature and cultural imagination. Gibbs' critique of his own writing suggests a critical link between the ways in which scientific arguments are evaluated as arguments and the ways in which the Scottish New Rhetoric enumerated rules for evaluating the efficacy of an argument. These rules, in turn, support aesthetic evaluations of the scientific labor of argument and an estimation of the ethos of the writer. Gibbs was clearly concerned with the presentation arrangement of his theoretical work; the ways in which he arranged the content of his articles and his presentation of theories, examples, and analogies were the driving force behind the consent his arguments demanded. Lacking a shared lexicon of discipline specific terminology, scientists fell back on other shared values deciding whether or not to undertake the expensive enterprise of publishing and disseminating his work. Once it was established in the larger world, scientists with discipline specific knowledge could begin to judge the accuracy of his work. That fact notwithstanding, the non-scientific shared values of argumentation seemed to have been a powerful factor in Gibbs' construction of his work, but it is even more important for placing his work into a larger context of a culture of science that values something more than the theoretical efficacy of abstract, scientific labor.

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Say *What?*: The Power of Language and Communication Demonstrated in Chuck Palahniuk's *Lullaby*

Abstract: Throughout *Lullaby*, Palahniuk manipulates traditional communication by obscuring the roles of speaker and recipient with the culling song, a poem that causes instant death to those who hear it. Despite the obvious incorporation of magic and fantasy, the novel reflects genuine aspects of linguistic functions and indicates authentic applications for the use of language and speech acts in the actual process of communication. The author highlights the impact that language bears upon one's psyche, as individuals' thoughts often transpire into words, and consequentially, into threatening actions that jeopardize others' well-being.

Palahniuk's manipulation of traditional communication is that victims do not actually have to hear the culling song for it to enact its murderous effects, hereby destroying the assumption that ignorance is bliss and further reiterating the significance of being able to accurately interpret speakers' language and intentions. Although no texts in actuality will produce effects as extreme as causing instant death to language recipients, *Lullaby* highlights the importance of reader discretion regarding textual purposes, intentions, and implications regarding linguistic communication to avoid misreading, misinterpreting, and misunderstanding.

Keywords: communication, magic, language, information, Palahniuk

Introduction

For most people, language represents the primary method of communicating with others, whether the medium of the language is spoken, written, signed, as in American Sign Language, or implied, as when using nonverbal gestures and cues to either drop hints or share a laugh with another individual regarding an inside joke. People utilize language as the primary transmitter of information, either to tell stories, give directions, teach lessons, clarify instructions, and provide descriptions using words as representations, such as when explaining physical or emotional feelings. Not surprisingly, Arthur L. Blumenthal declares that "most human activity employs language" (1), and Stuart Chase identifies language as "the most human of all human attributes" (352) and classifies it as a "tool" (19) for thinking and developing new knowledge. As this description conveys the process by which learning occurs, language conceivably represents the most essential aspect of the human condition.

Likewise, as words constitute the basis of language itself, words, then, may also be considered 'tools' that aid the process of communication. In order to communicate linguistically with others, individuals utilize a system of words, sentences, mechanical structures, and grammatical conventions that convey meaning to help others understand their messages and, in turn, produce intended effects from these exchanges.

By the very act of communication, or the act of utilizing language in order to participate in the delivery and/or exchange of information, however, both speakers¹⁹ and recipients²⁰ become subject to the possibility of misunderstanding, misinterpreting, and misusing language. One's choices of diction and syntax, the two largest aspects of language, play the most significant roles in determining the success (or lack thereof) of communication exchanges. Successful communication depends predominantly on the purposes of the communication (such as promoting oneself professionally when speaking with a potential supervisor during a job interview or when describing physical symptoms to a doctor, for example), the intentions of the communication (to get a new job or promotion or receive a medical diagnosis), and the particular recipient's interpretation and response to the language. As Chase remarks, "when people can agree on the thing to which their words refer, minds meet [and] the communication line is cleared" (9). When all individuals involved in the particular communication process arrive on the same page with regards to the meanings, connotations, and intentions of the language in use, the communication is generally considered successful, as all parties have clearly understood the messages being spoken and have been understood by everyone else receiving these messages.

When everyone involved in the particular exchange of information fails to achieve this understanding, however, communication then becomes unsuccessful. Although unsuccessful linguistic interactions may be attributed to any given number of factors, including hearing disabilities, illiteracy in the particular language being utilized, or ineffective diction, such as vagueness and strong use of slang or other ambiguous connotations, the ultimate reason for communication failure lies within discrepancies between recipients' interpretations of the speaker's messages, and in misinterpretations of speakers' essential intentions.

Regardless of the depth of an individual's concern for their communication skills, the individualized nature of language, such as with a single word's different connotative associations and slang terms, and the varying intentions of its use, makes language susceptible to manipulation, exploitation, and other types of abuse. J. L. Austin observes that the very act of "saying something will... normally produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the [recipients], or of the speaker, or of other persons" (101). This sphere of linguistic vulnerability transforms language from what Francisco Collado-Rodríguez identifies as "a tool that everybody acquires for the apparently innocent purpose of communication" (628) into a type of linguistic abuse in order to execute spiteful, sadistic, and even malicious purposes.

In addressing the concept of abusing, manipulating, misinterpreting, and distorting language, Alexander Tsesis mentions that "religion has been misused in many cultures to spread intolerant hatred. The institution of slavery was justified on the basis of religious ideology, and Islamic extremism continues to foment modern terrorism" (205-6). Just as careful and thorough studying to understanding concepts and master lesson objectives proves essential for learning in academic settings, understanding the meanings of religious doctrines derived from sacred texts requires meticulous and precise studying, as misinterpretations yield the potential for disastrous results, when these misunderstood ideas become perpetuated among numerous people throughout subsequent generations. Another example of language abuse involves the deliberate misuse of diction, in which select words are strategically assembled,

¹⁹ For the purposes of addressing both oral and written types of language and communication, the term *speaker* will be used to refer to both speakers and writers of language. In other words, it will be used to refer to the individual responsible for either creating or vocalizing the language and the one who instigates linguistic exchanges and communicative interactions.

²⁰ The term *recipient* includes all parties to whom language is spoken, either directly or indirectly, those for whom the language is intended, and those who hear the language used in communicative exchanges, either intentionally or unintentionally.

manipulated, and transformed into “catalysts for oppression” (Tsesis 206) by vicious speakers to purposefully offend, anger, embarrass, and/or defame the language recipients in order to satisfy vindictive and often malevolent intentions.

All of the purposes and intentions that language fulfills reveal it as a powerful aspect of information exchange, as well as an important means of creating knowledge, developing intellect, and establishing relationships. Consequentially, language embodies capabilities to satisfy positive purposes with benevolent intentions, such as when a lover proposes marriage or when a parent says *I love you* to his or her child, as well as contains the potential to serve dangerous purposes and wicked intentions, as demonstrated through insults, racial slurs, manipulation of one individual by another, and premeditated murder plots. Tsesis identifies hate speech as an example of this negative language use and explains that language “intended to elicit violent responses... can be dangerous both at the time it is uttered and in the future” (204). Similarly, Chase pinpoints language as “the mightiest weapon in the arsenal of despots and demagogues” (21). With many instances in which language represents the guiding force in instigating dangerous interactions, such as violent protests, gunfights, and wars, Tsesis fittingly observes that “there is a continuum of... antagonism that starts with hateful speech” (204). Indeed, language represents a powerful means by which individuals develop ideas, shape their beliefs, establish their perceptions, and, in many cases, distort language in order to satisfy their own misunderstood perspectives, stereotypes, and inadequately-informed judgments.

Language and Literature, Language and Reality: Chuck Palahniuk's *Lullaby*

Both positive and negative uses of language become evident when examining past and present-day literature, music, television programs, court trials and legal interrogations, religious and political propaganda, personal and professional correspondence, and, the most modern medium of language transmission, social media and electronic communication, including e-mails, text messages, and video interactive programs like *Skype*, *Snapchat*, and *Hangout*. Chuck Palahniuk addresses the reality of constant influential language infiltration and media exposure, as well as metaphorically demonstrates the many functions of language throughout his novel, *Lullaby*. Despite the novel's incorporation of impractical elements of fantasy (spells, a supernatural book, and characters possessing immortal powers) and impossible circumstances that only manifest (and resolve, for that matter) because of magic, rendering it obviously fictitious in genre, the protagonist's, narrator Carl Streator, destructive use of the seemingly innocent culling song throughout the novel and his interactions with other characters reveal several truths about the use of language in reality.

Throughout *Lullaby*, Palahniuk creates a similar language-infused reality for narrator Carl Streator, whose oral reading of an allegedly harmless ‘culling song’ results in the mass murder of people with whom he comes in contact and, ultimately, transforms him into a murderer. This corruption manifests despite Streator's obvious struggle to maintain his ethics and limit his use of the culling song to instances similar to that of melodramatic vigilante justice, such as when he declares to “only ever use it for good” (Palahniuk 58). Streator, nonetheless, yields to the power that he possesses with the culling song and converts his sense of ethics into more of a distant afterthought, rather than the beliefs that comprise his moral fiber. While language and its many purposes, functions, speakers, intentions, and recipients are found virtually everywhere, many people, like Carl Streator and his initial reading of the culling song, remain unaware of the powers and potential for danger that language harbors. In many instances, once they realize the dangers of linguistic abuse, the consequential damage has already been done, and the results are often beyond the possibility of repair for both the speaker *and* recipient(s) of the language.

To assume that Streator is unaware of the power of language is an inaccurate assessment, because he comments that “in a world where vows are worthless, where making a pledge means nothing, where

promises are made to be broken, it would be nice to see words come back into power" (60). He contradicts this notion, rightfully so, when he asserts that "sticks and stones may break your bones, but words can hurt like hell" (74). Streator's awareness of linguistic power becomes evident in his despise of the media's linguistic saturation, which he criticizes in his recurring observations that "Big Brother... [is] making sure your imagination withers... no one has to worry about what's in your mind. With everyone's imagination atrophied, no one will ever be a threat to the world" (18-9). At a later instance in the novel, Streator remarks that "Big Brother fills us all with the same crap... he was clever the same way everybody thinks they're clever" (150). In addition to revealing Streator's perception of the media, these instances indicate that he views it as a method utilized by the government in order to eliminate individuality, prevent independent thinking, and dominate the lives of all citizens in order to establish dominance and exercise absolute power to satisfy the ulterior motive of forced compliance, involuntary conformity, and the abolition of free will.

Ironically, Streator essentially becomes both Big Brother and a type of submissive slave that he frequently condemns, when he realizes that he occupies the power of life and death with the culling song. Despite Streator's attempts to avoid the media's overwhelming influence and dissuasion of independent thought, he, nonetheless, becomes controlled by the culling song, in much of the same way that he attempts to avoid by evading all types of media. Just as the media, according to Streator, have taken measures to ensure that "anymore, no one's mind is their own... You can't concentrate. You can't think" (19), Streator robs individuals of their own free will and strips them of their right to personal opinions and independent thoughts by instantly killing them every time they evoke even the slightest annoyance. Even more, Streator, just like his perception of Big Brother's desire for conformity, expects everyone to think like him and share his preferences, opinions, and irritable demeanor, particularly in his partiality to quiet environments. Similar to his assertion that Big Brother continuously keeps individuals "always distracted" and "fully absorbed" (18), Streator, too, must continuously distract others, so that they will not discover that he harbors the power of the culling song and associate him with the murders. In his attempts to justify the murders with halfhearted excuses, including "he called me an asshole" (136), "he pushed me" (136) and "his stereo was too damn loud" (136), Streator simply perpetuates the notion that he and Big Brother are one and the same, at least in ideological theory.

Contradictorily, Streator dominates the lives of others, like Big Brother, as he becomes dominated by the culling song as a result of his now corrupted nature. Francisco Collado-Rodríguez asserts that *Lullaby* highlights the many potentials of language by illustrating that "the persuasive power of language to kill eventually gives way to the power of language to enslave people" (631), referring to how the possession of the culling song and the knowledge of its effects eventually corrupt Streator and condemns him to a life of malice and misery. All throughout the novel, Streator criticizes and condemns his neighbors, whom he perceives as "sound-oholics" (15) and "calm-ophobics" (18) because of their constant exposure to the media, via television, radio, newspapers and magazines and their inability to maintain a quiet environment.

As Streator initially learns about the culling song, he seems horrified and avows to never use it again. As the novel progresses, and Streator uses the song with increasing frequency, he desensitizes himself to the idea of committing murder and cannot control his urges to utilize the song, just as he feared were Big Brother's intentions within the intellect of masses—using the culling song, he kills people secretly, just as he fears Big Brother is doing to the intelligence of society. In later instances, Streator fails to take responsibility for his actions by portraying the culling song much more like a reflex instead of a deliberate action, such as "hitting me fast as a chill" (90), "the culling song echoes through my head" (103), and "for whatever reason, the culling song comes to mind" (114). While he sees his neighbors as dominated and enslaved by the media and government-Big Brother, he is indeed enslaved and controlled by the culling

song, as it overtakes his abilities to make decisions, control his impulses, and even, in some instances, decide who to kill.

In direct contrast to Streator's reminders throughout the novel about the constant infiltration of media exposure and advertisement influence, one aspect of the culling song that makes it particularly dangerous is the fact that its capabilities are not advertised or otherwise indicated in the actual song or in the book from which it is excerpted. Streator receives no forewarning of its deadly consequences until they become a reality. With this circumstance as an example, Chase describes one of the possibilities of unsuccessful communicative exchange by stating that "without ability to translate words into verifiable meanings, most people are the inevitable victims of both commercial and literary fraud [and] their mental life is increasingly corrupted" (27). Equally, without the knowledge of the poem's capacities for murder, Streator inadvertently kills his wife and infant daughter, rendering not only them, but also himself in many ways, victims of language abuse, in terms of misinterpreting its purpose and intentions as both speakers and recipients. Streator's oblivion conveys the importance of speakers' knowledge regarding linguistic meaning and the significance of thoroughly understanding the purposes and intentions related to all language utilized for successful communication.

Despite the conceit that fiction does not depict real(istic) actions within actual contexts, Barrie Ruth Straus proclaims that "fictional language is not without real effect" (220) and, throughout which, can indeed provoke the reader to "find himself contemplating the real world, or experiencing real emotions and real insights" (220). In keeping with how the elements of fantasy and magic in *Lullaby* function inversely to help readers understand the novel's implications for and revelations of reality, Collado-Rodríguez remarks that "in both a metaphoric and a literal sense, the fantastic in *Lullaby* has become a powerful device in Palahniuk's fiction to develop further his bleak evaluation of the human condition" (635). While the end result of murder stemming directly from one's misuse and misinterpretation of language remains entirely unfeasible, language does indeed contain the power to ignite passionate emotions and fervent dispositions that can then provoke such extreme results, as in Tsesis's descriptions of religious textual misinterpretations, the functions of hate crimes, oppressive language. Therefore, it may be inferred that the power of language, in and of itself, to serve as a murder weapon, serves two purposes within the novel: to challenge "our rationalized understanding of reality" (Collado-Rodríguez 621) and reveal language as the basis of one's thoughts, tendencies, and actions.

The impossibility of language to actually murder someone, much less through the verbalization of written communication, may provoke some readers to jump to the assumptive conclusion that words, then, are irrelevant and trivial in the grand scheme of communication. While these readers are partially correct in their assumption that words themselves bear insubstantial significance in terms of facilitating communication, they are equally incorrect by assuming that words play no critical role in constructing language for communicative use. What these readers fail to keep in mind is that words represent the most fundamental aspect of language; it is with words that language is constructed into sentences, which Edmund Burke Huey defines as "a unitary expression of a thought" (152), and Wilhelm Wundt further describes as "a linking of a succession of words or concepts" (20). Although these definitions can be argued in the cases of one-word sentences, such as "Help!" and "Fire!" both of these expressions contain the necessary information needed to convey a complete thought, this information is implied rather than articulated, as with multiword sentences.

With sentences, speakers may then proceed to fulfilling communicative purposes. Streator demonstrates an instance of utilizing sentences to construct meaning and convey communication, when he recites the culling song for the first time after realizing its deadly potential. He remarks that "the first word generates the second [and] the first line generates the next" (60), depicting how language is structured for communication, in words, which are used to make sentences, which are then used in

transmitting information. Although the result of this instance of communication (and all others which involve the culling song) yields the negative outcome of murder, Streator nonetheless demonstrates how language is assembled to fulfill the purpose of communication, in addition to demonstrating the importance, once again, of purposes and intentions of the particular language being utilized.

Although Huey denotes sentences, instead of words, as “the unit of language everywhere” (152), he does so because the sentence is the first unit of language that actually functions in order to convey meaning and serve communicative purposes because of its ability to express a unified thought. Similarly, Wundt explains that a sentence “stands as a whole at the cognitive level while it is being spoken” (21). Controversially, sentences do not represent “an image running... through consciousness where each single word or single sound appears only momentarily while the preceding and following elements are lost from consciousness” (Wundt 21), as these thoughts contain no unity and therefore, cannot function as conveyers of meaning for effective communication.

To illustrate, for instance, if someone utters the word *book*, with no other words preceding or following it, the purposes and linguistic intentions will remain unknown, as it is unclear what the speaker means (Does he mean *book* as a noun, *book* in the verb form, as in moving or traveling at a rapid pace, or *book* as an adjective, such as in the *book* cart or the *bookshelf*?) and what he intended by uttering this single word (Does he want a book from the bookstore? Does he want to read a book? Does he see a book out of place?). While this single word does not reveal any information for effective communicative purposes in this particular instance, when the word is combined with other words, as in the sentence *I want to read a book to you*, or in *I need my book for class*, the purpose of the words and the linguistic intentions become clear and comprehensible, thus allowing for communicative interaction and linguistic exchange to occur.

Just as a house cannot be built with a single brick, effective communication cannot occur using words alone. While a single brick used to build a house is nothing more than, well, a brick, a single word represents nothing more than a unit of language when attempting to communicate. Herbert E. Brekle emphasizes this concept by explaining that “the use of words—put together into appropriate texts... is regarded as a powerful means of exerting influence” (83). Also, as the number of bricks needed to build a house depends on the house’s intended size, the number of words needed to construct meaningful language and produce effective communication depends on the speaker’s purpose for utilizing the particular words, as well as the speaker’s intentions resulting from the linguistic interaction. Both of these aspects represent critical components of language in communication, and Streator’s use of the culling song demonstrates the consequential results that occur when both aspects fail to work harmoniously. In addressing the culling song’s intention, some readers may raise the question that if the song itself harbors the capacity for murder, then what exactly is it about these particular words in this exact arrangement that renders it capable of killing people? The culling song, after all, is just “an old song about animals going to sleep” (255). Despite Streator’s reading aloud of printed language, as opposed to actually constructing the language himself, the language proves just as compelling and effectual as that which one constructs on their own with the intention of communicating.

Like the bricks that when grouped together correctly and effectively, form an entire house, words must also be grouped together to form structures, phrases and/or sentences. It is with phrases and sentences that speakers’ meanings are conveyed and their intentions are understood, so that successful communication becomes possible. Tzvetan Todorov clarifies this notion by emphasizing that languages, whether “spoken or written—are not fundamentally different from other human acts: they are all on the same level” (118). The significance of Carl Streator’s actions lies not within the plausibility of using language (which in this case, manifests in the form of a nursery rhyme lullaby) as a means of murder, but within the revelation and realization that language is indeed capable of provoking destructive ideas,

narcissistic philosophies, and prejudicial, intimidating dispositions among individuals who are undeniably capable of producing results such as suppression, oppression, fear, and ultimately, murder.

Speaking of the destructive capabilities of language, Chase affirms that “there is little fault to be found with the words we use, [yet] much with the way we use them” (353). Like the culling song, individual words in and of themselves convey no immediate danger. As Karl Sornig reiterates, “it is never the words themselves that should be dubbed evil and poisonous... the responsibility for any damage that might have been done by using certain means of expression still lies with the users” (96). After all, individuals must combine words with other aspects of language, such as syntax and grammatical conventions, in order for language to develop any type of comprehensible meaning necessary for communication. In these combinations, on the other hand, lies the potency and power of language, because it is in these combinations that reveal the purposes, intentions, and interpretations. Following the acknowledgment that words in particular combinations and contexts embody these capabilities and execute these powers, the question that then arises is: how are they able to do so?

The power of language is most commonly explained with the speech-act theory, which justifies how words function as not only units of communication, but as executors of actions as well. One of the speech-act theory's earliest pioneers, J. L. Austin, recognized that not all word combinations and sentences serve the sole purpose of simply making statements, but can also function to ask questions and express exclamations, commands, wishes, declarations, or concessions. Acknowledging these distinctions becomes a critical aspect in understanding the three types of acts, locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary, which comprise the speech-act theory and explain how words function to execute different types of actions.

While words must generally appear in the form of a sentence in order to convey meaning, Austin considers most sentences *performative*, meaning that “the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action—it is not normally thought of as just saying something” (6-7). Moreover, Austin proclaims that “there is no great distinction between statements and performative utterances” (52), since sentences rarely serve the sole purposes of literal matters-of-fact. Karl Sornig echoes Austin in his observation that “there is no such thing as a ‘pure,’ unbiased statement: the process of verbalizing thought and transmitting ideas involves the simultaneous signaling of purposes, aims[,] and wishes[,] along with the message itself” (95). This lack of distinction indicates that all language is powerful, to some degree, in executing functions not limited to that of just exchanges of communication. One of these functions specifically regards matters of power, not just in terms of the capabilities of language to fulfill various purposes, but also in how language enables other individuals, such as in Brekle's assertion that “all... types of speech acts are in principle suitable for enforcing the interests of power” (82). The particular power being enforced and the way of enforcing the power depends largely on the type of speech act utilized under different circumstances.

The three types of speech acts are distinguished not only by the speaker's intentions for them, but by the results that they evoke. As such, they reveal the degree to which language proves a potent instigator of ideas and actions. Locutionary acts, the least complex of the three, represent statements of thoughts or observations, illocutionary acts fulfill an intention and include warnings, threats, requests, commands, and descriptions, and perlocutionary acts, represent “the achieving of certain effects by saying something” (Austin 120). Streater's initial reading of the culling song for entertainment purposes indicates his assumption that, with the song, he was performing an illocutionary act. Reading the culling song, unbeknownst to speakers, however, instigates the perlocutionary act of murder.

Granting that Streater initially bears no deliberate responsibility for the murders that occur directly because of his reading, the culling song and its uses exemplify the importance of distinguishing between the different linguistic functions, particularly between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, and utilizing

language to best execute these functions. George M. Wilson declares that “the illocutionary force of an utterance centrally depends on the utterer’s speech-act intention” (181). True, a speaker’s intentions greatly determine what language they use in different communicative exchanges, but problems arise when a speaker’s intentions are not perceived by recipients as such, or when the language executes a different speech-act than what the speaker originally intends, as in Streator’s case. The discrepancy between these concepts demonstrates why discrepancies between speakers and recipients of language during communication lead to failed communication, as the language did not actually do what it intended to do or was not interpreted as such.

Although some critics may argue that a single component of the communication process, speaker or recipient, maintains precedence over the other, a noteworthy aspect of the speech act theory is that it emphasizes both types of participants (speakers and recipients) in the communication process as equally critical components, by substantiating that the particular speech act that is performed, and the success of it, for that matter, depends just as much on speakers’ intentions as on those of recipients’ responses. Throughout *Lullaby*, Palahniuk manipulates the communication process and obscures the roles of speaker and recipient with the various circumstances surrounding the culling song.

Despite the additional challenge of magic incorporation and the impossible likelihood of the novel’s events transpiring in actuality, they do reflect genuine aspects of language and its functions, as well as indicate authentic applications for the use of language and speech acts in the authentic process of communication. For one, the culling song does not require Streator to actually verbalize it in order to execute its capacity to kill; in many instances, Streator reports simply thinking the song or having the song “spin through [his] head” (90). Another character in the novel, Mona Sabbat, explains to Streator that the predominant factor in the culling song is “the practitioner’s intention” (77) and that any spell, be it the culling song or any else, will work “if the practitioner’s intentions are strong enough” (77). In this instance, Palahniuk highlights the impact that language bears upon one’s psyche, logic, and rationale, much like Tsesis discusses with hate speech, slurs, and verbal slander, as one’s thoughts often transpire into words and consequentially, into actions that can pose immediate threats to the safety and well-being of others.

Granting that the speech-act theory focuses primarily on the speaker and recipient during communication, Palahniuk further challenges the functions of language by using the culling song to suggest that language, in and of itself, contains power that extends beyond the control of both the speaker *and* recipient, like “words... mixing in a soup that could trigger a chain reaction” (245) when formulated into “just the right combination” (245). Streator does not intend to kill his family upon the initial reading, nor does his family wish to die as a result of hearing it. Death does indeed occur, in spite of Streator’s innocent intentions and his family’s guiltless reception resulting in unknowing interpretation.

Even so, similar instances occur with real language use, such as when a speaker makes a statement with no intention of causing discomfort, yet the irritated recipient cannot pinpoint exactly why the language upset him or her. Because this particular recipient cannot explain what exactly irritated him or her, communication lines between the two parties become increasingly irreparable, eventually damaging (and in some cases, completely destroying) the relationship between the two individuals, as proven to represent an underlying factor in many cases of divorce, lawsuits, and disintegration of business partnerships. An innocent articulation, when combined with an indistinct interpretation, catalyzes serious consequences that usually do not mimic, but certainly represent, Streator’s initial encounter with the culling song.

Palahniuk’s manipulation of traditional communication interactions is that a recipient does not actually have to hear the culling song in order for it to enact its murderous effects. This reason resides among the many that contribute to the culling song’s extreme capacity for danger: since recipients are unaware that they are indeed inadvertent and involuntary within this communicative exchange, they

remain unable to defend themselves. Here, Palahniuk problematizes the notion that ignorance is bliss by illuminating the fact that not knowing what others think can indeed directly impact one's safety and welfare. Although many individuals are taught from very young ages to not dwell over the opinions of others, this mindset may not prove the most advantageous, especially in terms of defending oneself from developing stereotypical perceptions, succumbing to bandwagon fallacies, and from becoming targets of extremists with opposing views and malicious intentions.

Despite the element of magic and fantasy that contributes to the culling song's dangers, speaking a more practical context, Brekle claims that "only if the victim sees through the mechanisms of the... speech, is he in a position to resist its effects" (82). This notion, when examined alongside the culling song's unknowing victims, reiterates the importance of not only the language that one employs, but also the significance of being able to accurately interpret speakers' intentions for the language of which one becomes a recipient. In other words, remaining ignorant to foreboding language and its subsequential results, all but pardons one from falling victim to its effects. In many cases, as with the culling song's unsuspecting recipients, this oblivion only exacerbates the victimization process.

Streator's eventual use of the culling song as a perlocutionary act to eliminate anyone who crosses his path not only reveals his corrupted nature, but also illustrates the importance of understanding exactly what language means, how to utilize it to engage in effective communication, and what potential consequences for negative reception exists in the particular use. According to Straus, Austin "stipulated his theory of language did not apply to literature, which he excluded as nonserious and parasitic use of language" (213). Interestingly, in a direct contrast, Todorov acknowledges literature as "a conscious use of language, as opposed to that unconscious, careless use of it in practical discourse, where it is merely a function of the need to communicate" (123). Although no real texts will produce effects as extreme as causing instant death to all recipients when read aloud, some texts, such as those outlining religious doctrines, political propaganda intended to rouse fear, and texts that feature difficult subject matter, like suicide, rape, drug abuse or addiction, and terminal illness, tend to be already subjective by the nature of the content. These types of literature highlight the importance of reader discretion and reasonable discernment regarding the purposes and intentions of the text in order to avoid misreading, misinterpreting, and misunderstanding.

Conclusions

Literature, just like all other types of language used for communicative purposes, bears the power to persuade, provoke ideas, and corrupt readers, as Streater demonstrates with the culling song. Wilson echoes this notion by explaining that "a fundamental but minimal part of what is involved in understanding a literary text is the reader's understanding of the sentences it contains as expressions of definite linguistic meanings and as bearers of particular illocutionary forces" (181). Readers represent both recipients and speakers of the language that authors utilize and must understand not only what is meant by the language, in terms of denotative and connotative significance, but also the implications that the language conveys - and the speech-acts that the language can indeed provoke.

The various facets that comprise the speech-act theory are, of course, not intended as substitutes for common sense, nor are they to be regarded as transcending the boundaries of reality and plausibility in order to prove applicable in actual contexts. Austin verifies this criterion by avowing that "it is very commonly necessary that either the speaker himself or other persons should *also* perform certain *other* actions, whether 'physical' or 'mental' actions" (120).

Like the culling song, which proves no threat to safety until it is initially read, the influential dangers of literature lie not within the texts themselves, but within the potential for abuse by readers following

their exposure to it. The culling song, though unrealistic in nature, initially emphasizes and continuously reiterates the importance of linguistic purpose and communicative intention, whether communicating in spoken, written, signed, or nonverbal language. It is not in the culling song's words, phrases, content, or themes, but in the linguistic purpose and underlying intention where the dangers and potentials for abuse and misinterpretations lurk.

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New Performing Sites Searching to Become Third Places: Communicating through Culture after the Economic Crisis

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to explore the important role of the arts to communicate and share with others. As Arts Managers, we study the impact of arts and how they engage audience members and their community. This paper analyzes the consequences of the Spanish economic crisis on the arts and the appearance of new spaces where audience members encounter art and a community. In order to carry out this study, several interviews with companies and new cultural spaces in Spain were carried out. Through five case studies we will explore who develops these new places and why, their characteristics and how they respond to the needs of the 21st century audience members. It also explains why these new venues are searching to become third places where artists and audience members can grow as human beings. Some of the conclusions of this project suggest that these new venues were created to help people encounter themselves with the arts, but they also point out the idea that changes in how people consume cultural activities are happening, which are provoking a shift in the way we produce and present them.

Keywords: communication, theatre, third places, community building, Generation X, economic Crisis.

Motto: "Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it" (Boal 16).

Introduction

It is 2016 and Spain continues to be the second country with the highest unemployment rate in Europe after Greece. Moreover, according to the report of INE (Statistics National Institute) in unemployment ("Actividad, ocupación y paro" np.), youth unemployment is still above 40%. However, this "orphaned" country with no government for the past nine months, continues to struggle to recover from frustration and distrust among its citizens. After years of being abandoned and considered a frill, the arts and artists are trying to rise from the ashes to recover their role in this resilient society. This paper analyzes in which way the economic crisis has influenced the creation of new performing spaces that aim not only to entertain their audience, but to become a third place where audience, creators and community can share and communicate through cultural and social activities. In order to do so, five case studies from different organizations related to the arts in the city of Madrid will be presented. The first goal of this paper is to demonstrate that due to the economic crisis new spaces and alternative forms of theater are created to fulfill a need in our society. The second goal is to prove how a particular group in our society generates these new initiatives: the "Generation X." The third goal is to demonstrate how these spaces are meeting the audience's demand of finding a new place to interact, communicate and grow as individuals. And last but not least, how these "third places" impact our community. I will also raise the question of changing entertainment tastes through these case studies and how this economic but also social and existential crisis has changed the way we perceive and participate in the arts.

Communicating through Culture

On logical grounds there is no reason to argue that culture is one of the best ways of communication between human beings. Since the first cave paintings or shared storytelling till today, art has been an important tool to express and share our values, emotions, concerns and desires. Furthermore, if we analyze the term communication and its origins from the Latin words *communis* and *communicare*, we are able to find that *communis* is a noun which refers to something common or shared and *communicare* is a verb which means “make something common,” which is, in the end, the purpose of any cultural activity: to share with others.

In 1970, at the United Nations Conference for Education, Science and Culture the significance of culture as an “important component to human life and one of the principal factors of progress” was established. Moreover, culture was considered a way of life and a necessity of communication among people, as it encourages the “development of essential human values and individual dignity” (UNESCO 1; my translation).

Thus, in this paper I want to describe not only how the arts actually foster communication with others but, furthermore, how this becomes a need and helps community building. In order to do so, I will concentrate this study on the performing arts and, at some moments, specifically on theater. According to Eversmann—who bases his research on Csikszentmihalyi and Robinsons’ work—there are four ways in which audience members deal with a theater performance. Eversmann describes the four dimensions of theatrical reception: the perceptual dimension, the cognitive dimension, the emotional dimension, and the communicative dimension (148). I want to focus on this last one. When he describes it, he explains that the communicative experience integrates the rest of dimensions and that it talks about the interaction between the spectator and the performance, not only individually, but how it is later discussed with other colleagues or friends (Eversmann 158). Therefore, people do not attend to performances just for the interest in a particular art form or artist, but also for the benefit of socializing and sharing with others. That is why, for example, the study conducted by the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance identified the following items as some of the key barriers that keep audience members from participating: “not having friends to go with and not wanting to go alone to an arts event” and “feeling that other people like them are not going to be there” (qtd. in American for the Arts 11). In the same way, Bonita Kolb explains that while “the desire to gain knowledge is the most important motivator for museums (...) socialization is the most important motivator when attending other art forms” (71). In summary, we find again the concept of sharing with others and the relationship of culture and communication as important human activities.

If that is the case, and intuitively we all know that cultural activities are part of the community building process and, therefore, should be considered an important part of economic and human development, why, whenever there is an economic crisis the first element to be shut down is culture?

The Economic Crisis in Spain and Its Impact on Cultural Consumption and the Creative Sector

Since 2008, one of the key issues in daily life has been the economic crisis. Many sectors have suffered throughout these years. According to the 2015 annual report from the SGAE (Spanish General Society for Authors and Publishers),²¹ in 2014 the arts started to rise from the crisis. Although the news is encouraging, this represents only a slight improvement compared to the data from previous years. For example, looking at theater (which in 2014 represented 93,5% of the performing arts), it was down by 30,4% in terms of number of performances from 2008-2014. Moreover, theater attendance dropped from 2008 to 2013 by

²¹ These reports analyze the number of productions, the attendance and the income of different art disciplines each year.

33%. 2014 showed a slight increase of audience attendance, easing the percentage to a loss of 27,5%.²² Additionally, cultural consumption fell from 17.000 million euros in 2008 to 12.000 million in 2013, justifying a loss of income from 2008 to 2013 of 15,8%. One of the biggest triggers for this reduction was caused in 2012 by the value added tax increase in cultural activities (from 8% to 21%), making it impossible for many of the attendees to actually purchase a theater ticket.

These numbers illustrate the major impact of this crisis in the theater sector. The reduction of productions entailed the reduction of job positions; the drop of attendees implied a reduction of income and so on. Moreover, and as Rubio Arostegui explains in his report, one of the biggest problems that the performing arts are facing is their reliance on public expenditure which, due to the crisis, was reduced 20% (according to the entire report) (25). Another key issue was the promise of a private funding and sponsorship law, to help out due to the cuts of public budgets, that was never carried out (Bustamante, "Crisis cultural" 15).

Furthermore, given the struggle for survival, producers and artists began to question their priorities: profit or culture, quantity or quality. Equally important, due to the ticket prices, art professionals started to question the accessibility to many of these activities, demanding that the government take action. If, as the UNESCO claims, art should be accessible to everyone, and in the case of Spain much of it is still subsidized by the taxpayers, expensive ticket prices (due to the increased tax) become a question of injustice. In other words, Bustamante explains in his report how this economic crisis evolved into "an ideological crisis that questions the role of the Government, of the public sphere, in the reproduction and diversity of culture in each country" ("España" 7; my translation).

Faced with this distressing situation, the emergence of a renaissance of the cultural sector takes place, seeking new alternatives to continue with their passion despite adversity. This surge has the trappings of Castells' resistance identity, in which a group rises when it feels that they are culturally excluded and they decide to create new ways to identify themselves to confront the dominant group (17). In this case, most of the creative sector, finding it impossible to continue their projects with the help of the government, have sought out new alternatives that will allow them and potential audience members to grow as human beings, given that culture shapes our identity and fosters mutual understanding. Many of these activities will fall under the category of off-theater or even off-off-theater (bordering on illegality with, for example, performance spaces without permits to host those activities).

In an interview with one of the founders of *La casa de la portera*, he mentions that the idea of creating this new space "was born out of necessity (...), an urgent necessity of working for ourselves. The crisis had paralyzed many of the projects that we were involved with. (...) We decided to voice a yes for ourselves" and create our own project (Matret qtd. in San Román 11; my translation). Unfortunately, this project lasted only a couple of years and it closed due to the impossibility of the owners to continue with it. However, more projects emerged demonstrating the necessity of artists and audience members to create, access and share culture in a different way. It is this entrepreneurial spirit and the search of these new initiatives what motivated this article.

Case Studies, Third Place and Participative Audience

For this study five interviews were conducted with the owners or communication staff of each of these alternative spaces during the months of June and July of 2016. Each interview consisted of 33 questions, both open ended and closed questions. The interview questions explored the following topics: motives for the creation of the new space, type of space, activities and programs offered, current audience and their

²² One could ask if the performances that they attended to were in big theaters or in alternative venues which might not be analyzed by the SGAE (since this information is not specified in the report).

behavior, communication strategies and finally the impact of their activity in the community / neighborhood.

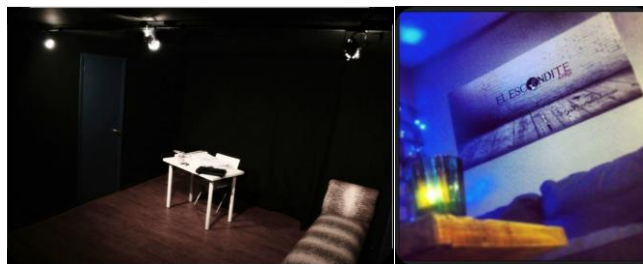
The five different sites were: *Microteatro por Dinero* [Microtheater for Money], *el Escondite* [The Hideaway], *Nave 73* [Warehouse 73], *Santa y Señora Artes Dramáticas* [Saint and Lady Dramatic Arts] and *Galería Modus Operandi* [Modus Operandi Gallery]. In order to provide a context for the reader, it seems important to describe each of the spaces before starting the analysis.²³

The first space is *Microteatro por Dinero*. It is an alternative space in the center of Madrid that offers a new theatrical format. Five 10 square meter rooms where 15 minutes or less theatre productions take place every hour for five hours (9 plays each day/21 plays per month). The selection process of these plays always searches, according to Lucia the theater coordinator, for new original and different proposals. The space allows 15 audience members for each performance. With this project, Miguel Alcantud and his team promote a new way to enjoy theater where the audience members can decide how many and which plays to attend, while they can enjoy in the bar a drink, traditional appetizers and view an art exhibition. Each month's exhibition and theater shows must be related to a specific topic such as "friendship" or "for money." Thus, with this new entertainment concept, audience members combine leisure time and culture in one.



Images 1. *Microteatro por Dinero* (Bar and hall with the entrances to the performing spaces)

The second space interviewed is *El Escondite*, a space hidden in the neighborhood of the "Latina" (a traditional and trendy quarter). This space features a variety of productions: small 10–20-minute productions, medium length and long productions. Its creator, Diego, searches through this space to create a relationship between artists and their audience, so they not only enjoy the artistic quality of their performances but also, they feel as part of a family.



²³ All photos were taken by the author of this article

COMMUNITY AND COMMUNICATION FROM A SYNCHRONIC AND DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE - PART I

Images 2. *El Escondite* (performing space and bar)

The third space is *Nave 73*. From the darkness of an industrial building in the working-class neighborhood of “Palos de la Frontera” a space for multicultural settings arises. Their owners search to create an innovative space that includes performing arts, concerts, workshops, events and visual arts. Moreover, they present themselves as a space where artists from all over Madrid can create and feel at home, mingling in their unique and personalized cafeteria.



Images 3. *Nave 73* (Bar and performing space)

The fourth space is *Santa y Señora Artes Dramáticas*. This venue opened their doors this past summer in the heart of la “Latina”. Its creator, Lorena Toré, designed a new place that combines the magic of an antique, souvenirs, fashion (second hand clothes) and curious shop with the opportunity of attending magic shows, theater, art exhibitions and fashion parades among others. Lorena describes the place as a room for experiencing, a corner to dream and to find. The interesting thing about *Santa y Señora Artes Dramáticas* is that they do not offer multiprogramming. Actually, her programming is *ad hoc*. Artists come to Lorena with a project and she decides if the project fits the vision that she has for *Santa y Señora Artes Dramáticas* and then she programs them. In a way, this has a resemblance to the site-specific movement where the space adapts to the artists. Lorena states, “I want people to be honest with their artistic proposals, to be free with the story they tell” without self-censoring themselves. She claims that this space should be a safe environment for artists to tell and share their story.



Image 4. *Santa y Señora Artes Dramáticas* (Store)

The fifth and final space is *Galería Modus Operandi*. With a recent move to the “Barrio de las Letras” (the historic literary neighborhood), the owners of this space search for a combination between visual art, theater (as producers and presenters), poetry, publishing and film production company. The goal of its creator is to seek artists—that collaborate and create together—and spectators that will identify with their

"Nanaista movement." According to them, this movement emerges as "protest towards our cultural degradation, and especially the ethics of our society" (*Modus Operandi* np; my translation).



Image 5. Galería Modus Operandi
(gallery space/changing exhibitions and performance space)

Findings

After interviewing and visiting all the spaces, there were several aspects in common that captured my curiosity. The first element that caught my attention was the age of the creators/owners of these spaces or the people I interviewed. Almost all of them fall within *Generation X*, those born between 1961 and 1981 (there are different sources which consider that in some countries in Europe like Spain, due to the slow technological acquisition, this generation could be extended till almost 1990).²⁴ Although this could be interpreted as irrelevant data, if we analyze the characteristics of this generation and the current socioeconomical situation of Spain, described in the previous section, we might encounter that this is not mere coincidence. Authors such as Howe, Strauss or McCollum defined *Generation X* as a critical and cynical generation, especially distrustful of large institutions and entities such as the government. An illustration of this characteristic could be the 11M movement that occurred in Spain, which led to the rise of a new political party: Podemos, where most of its members are part of this generation. Other described features are the need to change something, to be heard, to feel that they own their work, that they are entitled to it; in other words, their entrepreneurial spirit to change society. As Reisenwitz and Iyer state, the people in this generation "want to make an impact on their organization's mission" (94). For instance, in the interviews I asked them why they decided to create these spaces and if it was a personal challenge, a professional challenge or a social challenge. All of them, except one, answered that both professional and personal challenges had driven them: one, to find their own path as professionals (as Matret mentioned before) and to give an opportunity and help other professionals in the sector due to the economic crisis (the fifth respondent only considered the professional challenge) and two, to prove that they could do it and that they could create a space that responded to their beliefs of what the cultural sector needs and should look like and what the society required. In addition, when I asked them if the objective of their organization was entertainment, cultural interest or economic reasons, all of them gave the highest value to the cultural interest followed by entertainment. These responses relate as well with two other features of this generation: their flexibility and their ability to survive, linked to the capacity of these creators to adapt to the circumstances and confront this economic crisis to find a way out.

²⁴ 33%, according to the INE, of the population in the Community of Madrid are from this generation ("Padrón continuo" n.p.)

This evidence is supported also by the data collected by Ernst & Young—where they analyze the strengths and weaknesses of workers depending on their generation—confirming my theory of why the age of these creators plays an important role. The results of their study show that *Generation X* is known for having the most effective managers, for being a revenue generator, for having traits of adaptability, for being problem-solving people and for encouraging collaboration. Perhaps, these characteristics explain why for all the interviewees listening to their own needs and to those of the audience became a necessity and encouraged them to fulfill the need of change.

The second item that caught my attention is the space used by these organizations and the way they use it. In Madrid, even before the economic crisis, people talked and knew about the “alternative venues.” However, these were small theaters such as *La Cuarta Pared*, where more than 100 people can be seated. Despite this, with the economic crisis new venues started to emerge, venues that resembled more the *Off-Off-Broadway*. In the same way as the *Off-Off-Broadway*, these new venues began their activity in areas and spaces that, until that moment, were not considered to be used as play houses. One of the great examples mentioned above is *La casa de la Portera*, a venue set in a flat in which the different scenes of each production took place in the different rooms of the apartment. Obviously, one of the characteristics of these spaces is the proximity of the spectator with the actor, an element that in some way fosters a more active relationship between the performers and the audience members, who feel part of the performance.

When analyzing the five case studies there were several elements regarding the space that grabbed my attention. The first thing I asked them was the reason for choosing that particular space and that neighborhood. Most of them stated that both the location and the characteristics of the venues were the reasons. Thus, for example, the space for *Micro Teatro por Dinero* used to be an old butcher shop; *Santa y Señora Artes Dramáticas* used to be a cultural association, a boutique and previously it had been part of the Novedades (Novelty) Theater (the back exit for the actors); the *Modus Operandi Gallery* used to be an old furniture store; *Nave 73* used to be an old printing press and prior to that a garage; and finally *El Escondite* used to be an office space. Some of them were radically reformed, in others the essence of the original space remains. For example, in *Micro Teatro por Dinero* the basement used to have the old cold storages whereas now they have five 10 m² performing rooms where productions are represented. But as Peter Brook would say: “I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space, while someone else watches him, and this is all that is needed to perform a theatrical act” (Brook II; my translation).

Because the truth is that it does not matter what the space looks like or what it was before, as soon as the arts “invade” the space, it is transformed and everyone in the room accepts it.

However, I kept asking myself the question of what had attracted the audience members at the beginning. Lucia, the coordinator of *Micro Teatro por Dinero* mentioned that at first it was the “space” and how different it was, but that lasted only a few weeks. Then it was the multiprogramming and the new way of consuming theater that attracted them. In the case of *Santa y Señora Artes Dramáticas* many viewers started their connection with the space through the store and then they learned about the performances. At the *Modus Operandi Gallery*, Laura, the director, explains that often those who went to the theater discovered the gallery afterwards. Thus, it seems that the link between all the activities, programs and services they offer plays an important role. Most of them rent the spaces, offer some type of workshops, three of them have a restaurant, a bar or a cafe, and also a small gallery and other activities or events. When I asked why, they all came to the same conclusion: you have to be diverse to survive. Moreover, the director of the *Modus Operandi Gallery* added something that I believe is important: “I think the model of a gallery that is currently established is going to die, because it doesn’t make sense to try to be or copy a super serious, quiet and stable museum. There is no way you can make it. You have to

create a place where people feel comfortable (...)" (Darriba; my translation). All of them, one way or the other, agreed with this statement. At some point of the interview, they all stated that what they were looking for was for audience members to feel comfortable; to offer them a new experience where they can enjoy and interact with others.

Based on these statements, I would like to relate this to Oldenburg's concept of the Third Place. In his book *The Great Good Place*, Oldenburg explains the need for any community to have places where people can get together and chat. He describes the third place as "a generic designation for a great variety of public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work" (Oldenburg 16).

In other words, it is a place where you connect with other people. Evidently, for any marketer the dream would be for their space to be considered a third place. However, according to Oldenburg, in order for a space to be considered, this space has to be:

1. A neutral ground: a place where individuals "may come and go as they please, in which none are required to play host, and in which all feel at home and comfortable" (Oldenburg 22).
2. A leveler: an inclusive place accessible to the general public with no membership or exclusion (Oldenburg 23-26).
3. Where conversation is the main activity (Oldenburg 26-32).
4. Accessible and accommodating taking into consideration time and location. These places can be available "to serve people's needs for sociability and relaxations" (Oldenburg 32).
5. Where regulars give the space its character. By regulars we mean, "those who show up regularly and play a fairly decent game become the regulars" (Oldenburg 34-35).
6. A low profile: plainness and modesty surrounding the inside of third places (36-37).
7. A playful mood: "every topic and speaker is a potential trapeze for the exercise and display of wit" (Oldenburg 37).
8. "Home away from home": a place that, according to Seamon, roots us, we have a sense of possession, we are regenerated or restored, we have freedom to be and there is warmth (Seamon qtd. in Oldenburg 39-41).

Perhaps some of these elements make it impossible, according to Oldenburg's prerequisites, for these five spaces to become a third place, but it is worth analyzing them. For example, if we examine the first requisite "neutral ground," some people might argue that if you have a set performance you cannot "come and go when you please" or that the owner or his or her team act as organizers or hosts. However, all of these can be argued through the case studies. In *Microteatro por Dinero* or the *Escondite*, you have several short performances each night and you can choose to which one you want to go while you have a drink at the bar. Thus, audience members can manage and create their schedules during their time at the venue. At the *Modus Operandi Gallery* audience members can come and go from the gallery when they want and, although there is a schedule for the performance that is not as flexible as the gallery, you can still enter the space with no "time constrictions." The same happens with the store at *Santa y Señora Artes Dramáticas*. The only venue that has more time constrictions is *Nave 73*, but still, it offers the services of its cafeteria and the art gallery where there is no set schedule. As for the existence of a "host," one could question how much interaction the audience members are going to have with the owner or the venue team of the space and if this would actually be considered a "host." Oldenburg sets forth as an example of third places the small cafeterias in a community, and if these are an example is the waiter a "host" or not?

Next, in terms of the space being a leveler, almost all of the venues analyzed fulfill this requirement. Yes, many may argue against this due to the existence of a ticket entrance to the shows, but there is no fee to enter the bar or the cafeteria, neither the store nor the gallery. In addition, most of them have a very affordable ticket price. For example *Microteatro por Dinero* is a €4 entrance/show, the *Escondite* is a €4,5 entrance/show, the entrance to the gallery is free and the long shows are €12, the entrance to the store at *Santa y Señora Artes Dramáticas* is free and to the show is €15 with a drink (for some of the shows), and lastly, the entrance to the bar is free at *Nave 73* and they have several discounts for their ticket shows (unemployed, people from their neighborhood, retirees and students).

Another essential point, according to Oldenburg, is conversation as the main activity. In these venues this might or not be the case. However, one may include that, even if people attended to the shows, the existence of intermissions and time before and after the performances can provide moments where audience members can share their experience with their group. Moreover, some of the shows offered at *Nave 73*, for example, have talkbacks that engage conversation between actors and audience members. In addition, most of the interviewees mentioned the important role of the cafeteria-bar for the audience members to mingle before, after and during the intermission of the show with their friends.

The existence of regulars can be discussed at different levels. For instance, according to all the interviews, most of these sites have people and audience members that, depending on the day of the week, come back. The *Escondite* has their regulars on Saturdays, *Nave 73* believes that they have more first-time attendees than regulars in the shows, but that they have regular attendees in the cafeteria. *Microteatro por Dinero* states that their regulars come during the week and not in the weekends and *Santa y Señora Artes Dramáticas* states that it depends on the show, but that there are people that are very regular due to connections with the owner. Finally, the *Modus Operandi Gallery* states that they tend to have regulars in the gallery exhibitions besides many artists that will visit and mingle even if they do not have their exhibitions up because they connect with the space and the philosophy. Therefore, these artists could also be considered regulars. Therefore, it seems that this requisite is also fulfilled by these spaces.

In terms of these spaces being low profile, I believe the images speak for themselves (see images 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5). Oldenburg also requires that the mood of these places should be playful. Now I would like to discuss this topic and the way the author presents it. Oldenburg explains that “[t]he urge to return, recreate, and recapture the experience is there. Invariably the suggestion is made, ‘Let’s do it again!’ The third place exists because of that urge” (38). However, he also specifies: “those who would keep conversation serious for more than a minute are almost certainly doomed to failure” (Oldenburg 37). Does that mean that if the theater offers something else than entertainment or comedy, they cannot be considered third places? If this is the case, why do people continue to go to the theater? When you attend a show, you might encounter yourself at a comedy or a tragedy or a mix of both and I believe that will not change why people attend to the shows. People enjoy the experience, they get involved with the stories whether they are sad or fun because one of the roles of culture is to help us understand the other, as well as ourselves, to shape our identity and to share that experience, as Eversmann mentioned, with others. Therefore, people can enjoy and engage with the experience even if it does not entitle laughter. Thus, if there is engagement and a dialogue between performers and audience, why cannot this be considered or involve a playful mood?

However, after analyzing these questions one may wonder whether there is a change in entertainment tastes. As Bonita Kolb mentions: “[t]he cultural organization can no longer present the art product as a passive experience where artists communicate their vision to an uninvolved audience, but must develop a means through which the audience is able to communicate ideas and even to engage in the creative process” (1).

If that is the case, this might explain why organizations, such as the ones studied, need to include more activities than the show *per se*. Maybe audience members are changing the way they want to spend their leisure time and the way they interact with culture. Maybe we are entering another dimension of what is considered culture and a performance by itself does not work anymore. In any case, and in order to find an answer to this “mystery,” more research should be done.

Based on these ideas and questions one might identify why all these venues try to fulfill the last requirement: the concept of home away from home. All the interviewees mentioned how important it was for them that audience members feel comfortable, guaranteeing that they have a great and new experience. Maybe that is the new search, where audience members want to find a place where they can regenerate, feel as if they owned the space and where, if culture is offered, it is a plus, but not the only reason. Therefore, as Natalie B. Tate demonstrates in her article “Museums as Third Places or What?”, by slightly interpreting and adapting Oldenburg’s model, the evidence of this analysis suggests that these spaces can also be considered third places. Additionally, as third places they can provide the possibility of meeting the human need to connect with others since, as Purnell mentions, the third place must be defined by “the interactions and attachments held by those who are attending (...)” (6).

Equally important for this article, and described by Oldenburg, is the great impact of third places in our communities and ourselves. The author explains how these types of places strengthen community ties due to the social interaction that happens in them. Moreover, they work as stress relief places for the individuals. In order to find out if this was the case in the venues analyzed, in the interview they were asked if they considered that their activity was impacting their community. All of them answered yes, without doubt. The key aspects that they discussed were: economic impact and socio-cultural impact. Some of them described the appearance of new businesses or the success of businesses in the area due to their activities (for example, bars and cafeterias). *Microteatro por Dinero* explained how the street where they are situated used to be an unsafe place full of drunken people, drugs and prostitution and how with their activity this changed and people started walking around, changing the whole setting of the area. *Santa y Señora Artes Dramáticas* described new partnerships among businesses in the area for a common purpose: to have a better neighborhood. Among these activities was to create a small fair to support Syrian refugees. Others talked about cultivating their neighborhood and bringing more cultural activities to the community, which also dragged new and different people to the community. In other words, giving the neighborhood other chances to improve their lives. In addition, one cannot ignore that one way or the other they are generating jobs. All of these remind the reader of all the creative placemaking projects that are taking place in different parts of the world. Where artists and creators get together to transform a neighborhood by implementing cultural activities. In other words, and as Vallejo mentions, culture becomes “the way in which society organizes” (23; my translation).

Conclusions

Through this article I tried to describe and analyze the impact of the economic crisis on the cultural sector and how new sites emerged to fulfill the necessities of creators and audience members. I also explained how these new places were created by a generation that searches for a change in our society. I demonstrated why these spaces can be considered third places and their impact in the community. I raised the question of changing entertainment taste and the new ways of participating in culture. In conclusion, this article talks about the important role that the arts have in our lives and how they help us communicate and share with others.

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Book Review: *The Silence of Animals: On Progress and Other Modern Myths* by John Gray

Reviewed work:

John Gray, *The Silence of Animals: On Progress and Other Modern Myths*. New York, 2013. Originally published in 2013 by Allen Lane, an imprint of Penguin Books, Great Britain. Hardcover, \$26.00

Motto: “Only humans cherish silence. It is a state we seek to find peace. Because only humans make noise” (John Gray).

In *The Silence of Animals*, John Gray suggests that this noise we create is a trap we set for ourselves as we weave our webs of self-denial. Rather than allow ourselves to be in the moment we generate myths about the past and the future, which prevent us from engaging the present. Our dreams of a Golden Age mingle incoherently with visions of a utopia which is always just beyond the horizon of the foreseeable future. Our capacity for self-deception and selective interpretation prevents us from seeing that the alphas and omegas of our collective dream world are nothing more than extrapolations from the present. The myth of progress is a confabulation of time, memory, desire, hope, and fear that prevents us from experiencing any of these states as they are in themselves. We cannot control the past or the future, so we take revenge against time and live in a never-never land, out of time and out of joint.

Gray makes three fundamental assertions. First, he claims that humanism is a harmful illusion consisting of the erroneous notion that the human animal is the locus of an objectively determinable and empirically measurable value schema. We act as if the moral structure of the universe has been rediscovered in the power and potential of human reason, which, properly attuned and polished, reflects the eternal order of the cosmos: “The Socratic faith that, together with Christianity, has shaped western humanism. Mixing a Greek idea of reason as giving access to timeless truths with a Christian view of salvation in history has not produced anything like a coherent synthesis; but the resulting humanism secular and religious—has formed the central western tradition” (205).

Gray’s second basic assertion is that we incorrectly conceive of history as a progressive movement toward the actualization of the power of human reason and the realization of the desire for human emancipation. Reason and freedom on the march; although this is not completely false, it is a tendentious story, and it fuels our hubris and our hopes which combine to form the assumption that the telos of history is human flourishing. It is all about us. Gray’s third point is that we are unable to avoid this tendency toward humanistic narcissism and futuristic fabrication: “Lacking a self-image of the sort that humans cherish, other animals are content to be what they are. For human beings the struggle for survival is a struggle against themselves” (21).

Perhaps the best way to demonstrate the significance of Gray’s work is to examine what he is not saying, which is something his detractors have occasionally failed to notice. He is not saying that societies and individuals have not, cannot, and will not, experience improved living conditions, increasing personal freedom, periods of relative economic prosperity, and many of the benefits derived from science and

technology such as increased longevity, relief from back-breaking labor and the advantageous proximities of social media. He is also emphatically not claiming that the progress of scientific knowledge in its theoretical or practical aspects is akin to mythology, as some constructivists and postmodernists imply. Gray asserts that scientific knowledge does accumulate as a body of verifiably true facts about the world which form the basis for the discovery of an ever-growing body of useful facts about the world. Scientific knowledge advances, step-by-step, with each new development building on what came before. When, for example, we discover the second law of thermodynamics, we do not abandon, forget, or ignore the first law.

However, not all forms of life and historical development work like science. Morality, civility, barbarism, ethnic chauvinism, and cruelty march to the beat of a different drummer. Because of our ever-present capacity for good and evil, any moral advances that we achieve are subject to loss or sudden reversal. Once institutionalized, science cannot regress, but morality can, and often does. The point is not that we are unable to think our way out of moral dilemmas and overcome our deep-seated fears and hatreds, but that the knowledge and behavioral gains in spheres subject to human passion can be lost. There is an escalator of science upon which each new development lifts us onto a new plane; but morality, civilization, and culture ride along on what is often a slippery slope.

Note also that Gray is not setting forth the familiar modest proposal that all progress is relative to values and expectations, such that yesterday's wants become today's needs which then become the basis of new wants, *ad infinitum*. This "relative deprivation" thesis about the future is a consistent feature of our experience, whether we choose to consider it or not. So is the notion that "progress" is itself a value which is evaluated in light of other values, a situation that creates a potentially vicious interpretive circle. But Gray's point is not primarily about these and similar relativist dilemmas which, for all their perspicacity, are nonetheless couched within an overarching historical teleology. Instead, he claims that history does not move in any direction at all, and certainly not 'ever upward and onward.' Reversals in moral progress, lapses into barbarism, holocausts, genocides, and global uncertainties abound today as in all previous centuries. But we do not see these reversals. We clothe the past with nostalgia and drape the future with unrealistic yearnings. This permits us to generate illusions of the present out of our inventions of the past and future.

It is of course, not just the average fool who dwells in this paradise; the great social thinkers have based their prognoses and prescriptions on the same fuzzy logic. Note, says Gray, that all of the theorists of social evolution have mistaken a current trend for the telos of history. From Adam Smith, to Auguste Comte, to Herbert Spencer, to Hegel and Marx, the great thinker extrapolates a general theory of progress from an exaggerated observation of some present-day trend that is prompted by a longing for an imaginary past. The present is conceptualized as a necessary evil, a way station on the route to utopia.

One obvious error behind this metaphor that so many prophets of history rely upon is that evolution does not have any telos or direction. Patterns of human behavioral evolution, or survival and change in animal species, or fluctuations in climate, look more like an endless series of adaptations and adjustments than a steady march toward a higher goal. Why should history be any different?

The deeper misconception behind theories of socio-historical evolution is the notion that the will to be free, the struggle for human emancipation, is the driving force behind the process. One would be free from regulation (Smith), from superstition (Comte), or from the claims of others upon our sympathy and assistance (Spencer). Alternately, one would be free to live in a harmonious society (Hegel) or free to develop all of one's talents as one pleases (Marx). To this, Gray suggests: "Mass killings, attacks on minorities, torture on a larger scale, another kind of tyranny, often more cruel than the one that was overthrown—these have been the results. To think of humans as freedom-loving, you must be ready to view nearly all of history as a mistake" (58).

Gray concludes his analysis with a discussion of that which prevents us from seeing things as they are. There are two ways to be fooled. One is to accept what is not true; the other is to refuse to believe what is true. Either way, we prefer to be fooled, because we are uncomfortable with ambiguity. Gray cites the work of Lionel Festinger, famous for his research into cognitive dissonance.

Suppose an individual believes something with his whole heart; suppose further that he has a commitment to this belief; that he has taken irrevocable actions because of it; finally, suppose that he is presented with evidence, unequivocal, undeniable evidence, that his belief is wrong; what will happen? The individual will frequently emerge, not only unshaken, but even more convinced of the truth of his beliefs than ever before. Indeed, he may even show a new fervor about convincing and converting other people to his views. (73).

And just what *is* it that we all believe, are all committed to, and have all acted upon, irrevocably? It is simply life itself, which requires a consistent, and quite possibly delusional, narrative. We want this narrative to be coherent and we prefer a glorious past and a happy ending. We think of a happy life as one that ends in fulfillment. But this leads us into a trap. We think of happiness in terms of self-realization, which is a teleological process, aiming for an end. So, we miss out on happiness because we fall into a false narrative of existence. Everything will be all right when I get that job, buy that house, find myself, et cetera. Here is life taking the form of a denial of life. Life becomes a perpetual transition between a glorious past and a utopian future. Perhaps, as Gray suggests, the pursuit of happiness is a fiction we can do without. Human beings are more likely to find happiness indirectly, when they are not busy distracting themselves by searching for it. The quest for self-expression and self-discovery has devolved into a self-limiting trap—the search for one’s true self: “The idea of self-realization is one of the most destructive of modern fictions. It suggests you can flourish in only one sort of life, or a small number of similar lives, when in fact everyone can thrive in a large variety of ways” (111).

One may wonder whether *The Silence of Animals* is supposed to function as yet another new age exhortation to be present, to cultivate an appreciation for the moment, to just be. Gray’s point may be that we must resist the temptation to fall prey to golden age and utopian thinking, cultivating a hard-nosed realism about the past and the future that allows us to make sound decisions in the present. Alternately, *Silence* may be read as an admonishment against overconfident and ill-conceived political decisions or projects. As the sociologist Robert K. Merton noted, we often invest so heavily in the intended consequence of a political project that we purposefully choose to ignore any unintended effects.²⁵

Or, is Gray suggesting something much deeper, more metaphysical? Do we need to cultivate a new relation to time, rejecting linearity in favor of a cyclical theory of time and social change wherein past, present, and future revolve eternally, or exist all at once?

Gray does not provide us with any answers to these questions because he does not specify his target. He fails to identify which level of theory and practice he is analyzing. Gray does not clarify whether he is addressing the myth of progress as it appears in the minds of individuals, in small groups, in social movements, in civil society, popular culture, or international politics. This is important because psychological processes differ from interpersonal interactions, and social constructs exhibit their own logic and require different analytical tools. His numerous examples and illustrations also cut across all of these domains, but they don’t cohere as a consistent analysis.

Ultimately, *The Silence of Animals* is a cautionary tale about the peculiar type of beings that we are. Our large-brained capacity for illusion, self-deception, distraction, and denial creates the noisy siren song that lures us out of the silence of animals and into the tragic dimension of human existence.

²⁵ Robert K Merton, “The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action.” *Sociological Ambivalence and Other Essays*. New York: Free Press, 1976. Print.

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